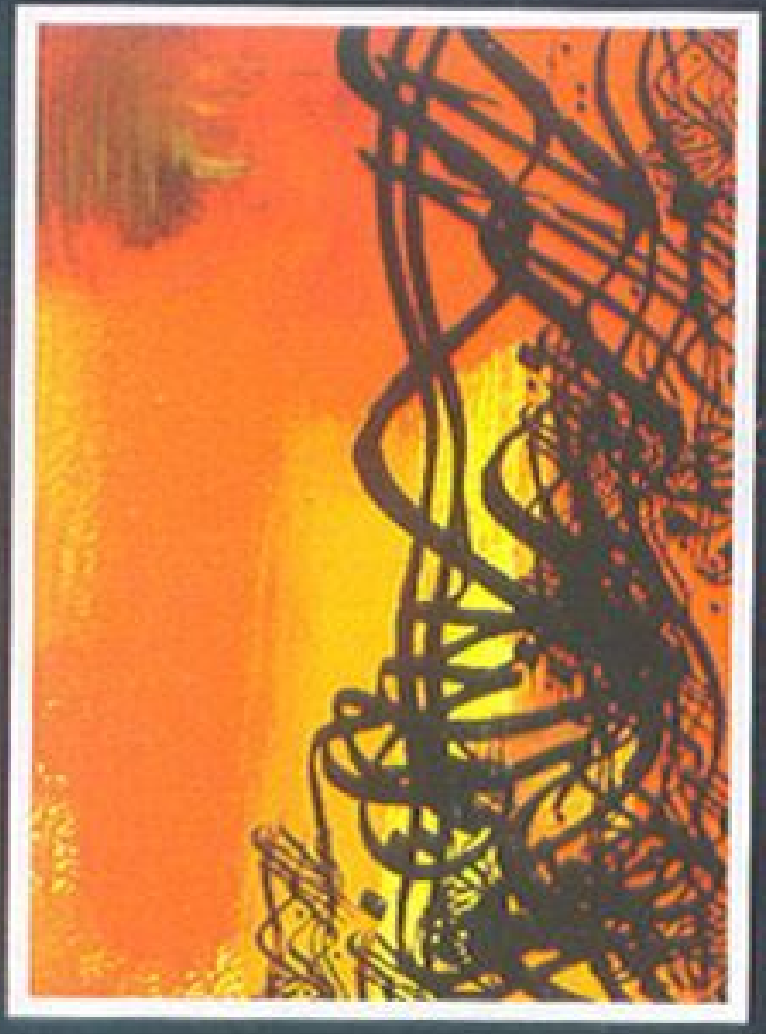
THE INHABITANTS OF HELL



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The Inhabitants of Hell

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Dar Al-Taqwa

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Hell contents 2/12/07 14:44 Page i

Table of Contents

Chapter One
Hell is Real 1 Seeing Hellfire 1 Being far from the Fire 2 Chapter Two
The People who will be
in the Fire Forever 20

People who are created for the Fire 20
The descending levels of the Fire 23
The unbelievers and wrongdoers 27
The replacing of the skins of the unbelievers 28
The repayment of the unbelievers is the Fire 29
No ransom is accepted from the unbelievers 37

The news received by the hypocrites 40
Good news of the punishment 43
Reasons for going to the Fire 45
Hell is the repayment for mocking the
Signs of Allah 47

Chapter Three
Those who will be Punished in the Fire 54

Those who wage war on Allah 54
Those who turn their backs in battle 61
Those who deliberately kill other Muslims 63
Those who deny and are arrogant 67
Those who hoard gold and silver 72

Conclusion 75
Glossary 77 ii

Chapter One Hell is Real
Seeing Hellfire

"You will certainly see the Blazing Fire! Then you will certainly see it with the Eye of Certainty." (102:6-7) This means that in the Next World you will see it with your own eyes whereas before you simply believed in it; your certainty was one of knowledge only. There you will have the eye of certainty, which means seeing it with your own eyes. In this *sura*, Allah gives us two of the stages of certainty: knowledge of certainty and eye of c ert a i n t y. In the Next Wo r l d , the *Sirat* will be set up over Hell and all people – believers and unbelievers – will see the Fire of Hell and they will cross the *Sirat* and see it burning and blazing below them.

When the believer crosses the *Sirat* and sees Hell and its terrors, he will recognise how faith has rescued him from this fearful torment and will rejoice. When he enters the Garden and sees its bliss, his joy will increase. So he has joy at his rescue from the p unishm ent and joy in the bliss he experiences and in the Bestower of that bliss. The believer will say: "Praise belongs to Allah who has saved me from

the Fire!" This is a great blessing and immense victory. That is why Allah says, *"Anyone who is dis tanced from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, has triumphed."* (3:185)

Deliverance from the Fire in itself is an immense favour and entering the Garden is a still greater one. Allah says about the Fire: *"There is not one of you who will not come to it. That is the final decision of your Lord."* (19:71) To come to a thing means to reach it without entering it. It is used to describe someone who goes to a

Hell is real

place where there is water without actually drinking from it. So each of us will see Hell and believers will recognise Allah's blessing to them because He has saved them from it, whereas unbelievers will be filled with regret because they will be punished in it.

An example of this might be reading about the city of New York. The reader comes to know that it is built on a number of islands, that there are many skyscrapers in it, and that it is densely populated. For most of us this remains just knowledge of certainty since none of us doubt the reality of its existence. But if someone actually flies over it and sees it from the air, he then has 'the eye of certainty'. If he lands there and moves around amid its skyscrapers and crowds of people, that is 'the truth of certainty'. In *Surat at Takathur* (102) Allah only mentions two stages. The third stage is mentioned in *Surat al-Waqi'a* where it states:

"But the truth is, if he is one of Those Brought Near, there is solace and sweetness and a Garden of Delight. And if he is one of the Companions of the Right, 'Peace be upon you!' from the Companions of the Right. And if he is a denier and misguided, t h e re is hospitality of scalding water and roasting in the Blazing Fire. This is indeed ***the Truth of Certainty.*** *"."* 95)

Being far from the Fire

"Anyone who is distanced from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, has triumphed." (3:185) Simply being far from the Fire is a blessing in itself. So how about someone who is both far from the Fire and also enters the Garden? He

obtains two blessings. In another place the Almighty says, *"It may well be that your Lord is going to destroy your enemy,"* which is itself a blessing and then He follows it with another blessing: *"...and make you the successors in the land so that He can see how you behave."* (7:129). But the price of these blessings is that He will examine how you react to them. Will you be thankful for them and be righteous slaves or will you deny them and be ungrateful for them. *"Man is indeed wrongdoing, ungrateful."* (14:34)

When the word "see" is used in relationship to a human being, it is understood that the organ of vision referred to is the human eye, but when it relates to Allah, it is different. Allah is too exalted to have an eye like our eyes and He is not ignorant of anything so that He should have to see it, because He knows it before it occurs. We know that there is a difference between the judging of a creature by the Creator and judging a creature by another creature. A metaphor illustrating this is that of a teacher of a particular subject who knows the levels of the students he is teaching. The headmaster asks for his opinion and he says, "So-and-so is a student who should pass with distinction while this other one is likely to fail." The teacher makes his judgement based on his knowledge of the level of each student. If a teacher were to fail a student based on his own assessment without an exam, the student who failed might tell him, "Your judgement was wrong. If you had tested me, I would have passed." But the headmaster confirms the t e a c h e r 's estimation through the student's exam and he becomes certain because the teacher first stated that the student would fail and then the student's failure of the exam corroborates the teacher's opinion.

Look at the precision of the words: *"You will be paid your wages in full on the Day of Rising,"* (3:185) which mean: "beware of expecting the results of your faith in this world because if you w e re to receive the r e w a rd for your faith in this world, it is ephemeral and will inevitably come to an end." So your reward for your faith can only take place in the Next World so that it will be a reward which has no end.

We know what happened at the second pledge of 'Aqaba when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made a contract with the *Ansar* from Madina and they said, "If we fulfil it, Messenger of Allah, what will we get in return?" He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not tell them, "You will be victorious" or "You will obtain this world." His reply was "Paradise." They said, "Give us your hand." He did so and they pledged him their allegiance

on that basis. If he had p ro m i s e d them anything of this world, those with intelligence among them would have said, "How little that is!" That is why when one of them remarked to his companion, "My love for you is as great as the whole world," he said to him, "Am I then so low in your estimation?"

It is as if Allah were saying, "Beware of thinking that the repayment of faith will be in this world because if it were in this world, it would vanish and be a very meagre re w a rd because it would connect faith to other than the grace of Allah. The reward can be no other than Allah's mercy and that is the Garden.

Allah says, *"You will be paid your wages in full".* The people of a w a reness notice that the expression "paid in full" must have something preceding it because the meaning of "I paid someone his wages in full" is that I gave him some pay and then he still needed more so I topped them up for him. Allah gives people something in this world and indeed the illumination of faith in the soul of the believer is a great gift. But a believer may die in battle and, because he dies in the battle, he will not see victory and will not see booty or any other worldly benefit. So what then is his portion? He will receive his portion "in full" on the Day of Rising. If someone obtains some reward in this world in the form of victory, booty, and the glory of faith defeating disbelief, that is part of the re w a rd, but full repayment will only take place in the Next World because the term 'payment in full' entails that the reward will be paid in the fullest sense on the Day of Rising. Anything coming before that is merely a part payment that those who receive it are entitled to.

Allah says, *"Anyone who is distanced from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, has triumphed."* (3:185) Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The place in the Garden of one of your whips is better than this world and everything in it. Read if you wish, *'Anyone who is distanced from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, has triumphed.'"* (3:185) When you say that "someone distances himself from something," the Arabic expr e s s i o n means that he is repelled from it. The opposite happens with the unbelievers. You know that the reason for entering the Fire is disobeying Allah and disobedience has an allure which attracts rebels. Faith comes to strengthen them but they are overcome by the attraction of disobedience. So its repayment is the Fire. Then the Fire exerts a magnetic force because it will be in a state of rage. That is why our Lord says, *"It all but bursts with rage."* (67:8)

The Fire all but bursts with rage at the unbelievers. What is the meaning of "all but bursts"? Have you seen a boiling pot? When the pot boils up, bubbles come from it and separate from what is in the pot. This is bursting: it means spurting out. These bubbles burn anyone who stops in front of the pot or touches it. By the intensity and force of the boiling, the water all but bursts out of the pot. It is the same with the Fire. Why does it almost burst with rage? It bursts with rage at the unbelievers because its basis is to praise, glorify and thank. Then Allah will ask it, *"A re you full?"* and it will ask, *"Are there more to come?"* (50:30)

That is one thing which indicates that the words "bursts with rage" describe a reality and why the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, explained to us that the Fire attracts its people. The Fire is the result of disobedience to Allah in this world. Such disobedience in this world is a lure which attracts unbelievers. The Messenger of Allah said concerning this: "The metaphor of me and you is that of a man who lights a fire and the grasshoppers and moths begin to fall into it and he chases them away from it. I pull you by your belts back from the Fire while you are doing your best to slip from my hand." (Ahmad and Muslim) See the excellent metaphor here – when you light a fire outside, the first thing that happens is that moths and insects are drawn to it. That is the reason behind the saying, "Many a soul yearns for its own destruction."

The insects approach, thinking that they are going towards the light. We observe that when you light a fire in the open, you find around it the bodies of many of these insects. Those insects somehow desired their own destruction. They were drawn to the light but the fire burned them. It is like that with the disobedient person who desires his own destruction because he does not know that this desire is drawing him to the Fire. *"Anyone who is distanced f rom the Fire"* means the Fire has a magnetic force which re p e l s those who are obedient to Allah, but attracts the disbelievers.

Even for someone to simply be away from the Fire so that he is between the Garden and the Fire and not in either is alr e a d y good. So what do you think about being away from the Fire and admitted into the Garden? Perdition is removed from such a person and he is given great benefit. This is the reason that the *Sirat*, over which we all will pass, is built over the Fire. When a believer crosses it and sees the Fire into which he would have fallen if he had been an

unbeliever, he will say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has saved me from that Fire!"

"Anyone who is distanced from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, has triumphed." (3:185) Triumph is deliverance from what you hate and receiving what you love. Deliverance from what you hate is in itself a blessing and after this deliverance from what you hate you go on to another blessing. This is indeed a triumph. We notice by the fact that the word "distanced" is in the passive tense that someone other than the subject has distanced him. It takes place because Allah honoured him first in his lifetime in this world by the blessing of belief which is what causes it to happen.

"Anyone who is distanced from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, has triumphed." (3:185) Why does Allah stress this? So that we know how faith will save us from a terrible fate. What is the means by which we are saved and protected from the Fire? The means consist of following the Path of Allah which has come to us on the tongue of His Messenger. Allah Almighty says: *"Anyone from whom punishment is averted on that Day has had great mercy shown to him by Allah. That is the Clear Victory."* (6:16) It is as if those from whom the punishment is not averted are attracted to the power of the punishment because the Fire of Jahannam has flames which attract and draw to it those for whom the punishment is decreed. The Almighty says: *"Those who reject their Lord will have the punishment of Hell. What an evil destination! When they are flung into it they will hear it gasping harshly as it seethes."* (67:6-7)

Those who reject Allah will receive the punishment which begins by their hearing the gasping of Hellfire when it seethes. Gasping, as you know, is a phenomenon which involves drawing in the breath, pulling the air into the lungs through the nose and mouth. So what do you think of the force of the gasping of Hellfire which drags and pulls in those whom the command dictates must be punished? The Fire itself will reply to the question of Allah when it hears His words, *"The Day when We say to Hell, 'Are you full?' it will ask, 'Are there more to come?'" (50:30)* Sо Hеllfirе presses and is eager to seek more in its enthusiasm to carry out its task of punishing the unbelievers. Allah created everything to carry out its appointed task, and the task of the Fire is to obey the command of Allah Almighty when He commands it to inflict punishment on those who merit it. That is why it is insistent in seeking those who deserve punishment. The Fire never ignores the command and power of Allah.

If Allah averts the Fire from someone, the Fire will obey His command. *"Anyone from whom punishment is averted on that Day has had great mercy shown to him by Allah."* (6:16) Allah does whatever He wills. If He were to call us to reckoning with justice, all of us would experience some of the punishment of Hellfire, but the mercy of Allah is what causes the Fire to not touch the believers because He forgives much. It is the gasping of the Fire which sucks in those for whom the punishment is written. We know that gasping is done with greater force than sighing. Gasping requires more air. The reason that gasping is stronger than sighing is that the task of inhaling is to make life endure and provide the body with air.

Man, as we know, can only go without air for a short time. Part of the mercy of Allah is that no one owns the air. This inhalation which gives life on earth exists also in the Next World and is ascribed to the Fire. It gasps in order to swallow up the disobedient. By doing so it carries out its allotted task. We also know that the Fire carries out its task with rage as Allah says, *"It all but bursts with rage."* (67:8)

Would the Fire carry out its task unless it was happy with it? The Fire is no dif f e rent from all the other cr e a t u res of Allah which carry out their task with happiness and harmony. The Fire nearly bursts with rage because the unbelievers are creatures who do not acknowledge the true worth of faith. The Fire has feelings like all other creatures. Everything in existence has feelings. The whole of existence – by way of example – was delighted at the b i rth of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The sky and earth, stars, trees and all else in existence were delighted at the coming of the Noble Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, because all of these creatures which have been subjected to man glorify and obey Allah by their very nature. Whenever a bringer of good news comes to guide mankind to the Straight Path – to make it obey its Lord – all existence delights at the coming of this herald of good news.

We know that the place where a man lives is delighted when he obeys Allah in it and saddened when he disobeys Allah, and deeply grieved by the existence of an unbeliever in it. This can be clearly seen in the words of Allah Almighty, *"How many gardens and foun tains they left behind, and ripe crops and noble residences. What comfort and ease they had delighted in! So it was. Yet We bequeathed these things to another people. Neither heaven nor earth shed any tears for them and they were granted no reprieve."* (44:25-29) So the land in which the people of Pharaoh lived had feelings as do all other gar d e n s , rivers, springs and all the benefits

with which man is blessed. They are angry and vexed when those who deny Allah and are ungrateful for His blessings live among them. That is why neither heaven nor earth wept for the destruction and punishment of those idolatrous, ungrateful rebels, but why should they weep when a believer leaves them?

This is explained in the words of Imam ʻAli, "When a believer dies, two places weep for him: a place in heaven and a place on e a rth. The place in heaven is where his good actions used to ascend and the place on the earth is where he used to pray." The place in heaven where a man's actions used to ascend is sad because it misses the righteous actions which passed through it, and the place of a man's prayer clearly misses the prostration of a person who is humble to Allah.

All of the beings created by Allah possess feelings and everything in existence except mankind carries out its task by the law of involuntary subjugation not the law of choice. Man alone lives by the law of choice, being able, in certain respects, to obey or disobey Allah. That is why the Qur'an mentions the prostration of all things to the Almighty: *"Do you not see that everyone in the heavens and everyone on the earth prostrates to Allah, and the sun and moon and stars and the mountains, trees and beasts and many of mankind? But many of them inevitably merit punishment. Those Allah humiliates will have no one to honour them. Allah does whatever He wills."* (22:18)

So all creatures except for human beings involuntarily prostrate to Allah and many humans prostrate to Allah as well, but many more merit punishment because they do not obey Him. Some of them rebel against the course laid down for them by Allah and do not believe in it and so Allah excludes them from His mercy. Some lack the heart for it and so Allah will not honour them. All existence, then, involuntarily subjects itself to Allah except for man. Some people are righteous and act in harmony with the submission to Allah shown by the rest of the universe and therefore existence delights in them. Some, by their discordant disobedience to Allah, cause the rest of existence to be angry with them.

Allah speaks about those from whom the punishment is averted through His great mercy to His slaves on account of their obedience to Him even though they fall prey to acts of disobedience at times and then repent of them: *"Anyone from whom punishment is averted on that Day has had great mercy shown to him by Allah. That is the Clear Victory."* (6:16) We know that this victory is the greatest

possible victory. There are various kinds of victory. Victory in this world takes the form of things like success, wealth, power or other such things. These are transitory victories because they soon come to an end. Either they leave man or man leaves them. The victory of the Next World, however, is the lasting victory which will never come to an end.

This is the difference between the blessings of this world and the blessings of the Next World. A person enjoys blessings in this world according to his own conception of what constitutes bliss. A peasant, for instance, may imagine that bliss is to have a bench in front of his house on which he can sit and to have some jars full of p u re cool water. A city dweller imagines bliss to be a spacious house with plush fur n i t u re and many electrical appliances. The image of bliss varies according to each person's imagination. The bliss of the Next World is a bliss which will never leave a person nor will a person leave it because it is in a timeless dimension of existence which has no end. The Garden contains what no eye has seen or ear heard and what has not occurred to the heart of man. That is why obtaining the bliss of the Next World is the Clear Victory.

Allah Almighty says about Abu Lahab[1]: *"Ruin to the hands of Abu Lahab and ruin to him! His wealth has not helped him nor any thing he has earned. He will burn in a Flaming Fire. And so will his wife, the firewood-carrier, with a rope of twisted fibre round her neck."* (111:1-5) So Abu Lahab and those like him will enter the Fire and will never enter the *d e e n* of Allah. But Allah also says: *"And you have seen people entering Allah's* d e e n *in droves ..."* (110:2) This statement opens the gates of hope and we know that 'Umar ibn alKhattab, 'Amr ibn al-'As, and 'Ikrima ibn Abi Jahl did enter Islam despite their previous vehement unbelief. *Surat al-Masad* c o m e s after *Surat an-Nasr*, in the order Allah willed, to teach us that t h e re are some people who will never enter the Garden because they are like Abu Lahab and his wife.

After that Allah says in *Surat al-Ikhlas*: *"Say: He is Allah, Absolute Oneness, Allah the Everlasting Sustainer of all, He has not given birth and was not born. And no one is comparable to Him."* (112:1-4) There is no god with Allah capable of under m i n i n g Allah's judgement. No one will ever revise Allah's judgement. So whoever disbelieves and associates others with Allah will inevitably be among those who lose themselves and are destroyed without being aware of it.

Allah says in another place: *"If you could only see when they are standing before the Fire and saying, 'Oh! If only we could be sent back again, we would not deny the Signs of our Lord and would be among the believers.'"* (6:27) When we look at the words of the Almighty *"If you could only see when they are standing before the Fire ..."* we do not find a resolving clause as we do in the sentences, "If you were to see so-and-so, you would welcome him," or "If you saw so-and-so, you would punish him." There is a resolving clause in both those sentences but the Qur'anic statement has no resolution. This is an aspect of the great eloquence of the Qur'an. There are events which no words are strong enough to convey. That is why Allah e x p resses them in this way, allowing every listener to grasp the meaning in the most fitting manner for him.

1. Abu Lahab, the uncle of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was one of the most inveterate opponents of Islam as was his wife.

In our lives we may find that a criminal in some land is tyrannising its inhabitants through murder, torture, theft and depredation and no one has power to resist him. Then Allah gives some police the power to arrest him. We see this corrupt mur d e r e r changing from a powerful oppressor into a trembling coward who practically kisses the hand of the police officer imploring him not to handcuff him. Someone who sees that may describe it to others saying, "If you could only have seen the moment when the police a rrested this criminal ..." and his words convey all the senses of humiliation which the listener can imagine. The resolving clause is omitted to enable the listener to use his imagination. To recount all the details of the arrest would limit the capacity of the imagination.

The words encompass what was seen so that each listener can imagine the forms of humiliation appropriate to the extent of his imagination. The Qur'an intends the terrors of standing before the Fire to be imagined in the same way. Some people attack the linguistic techniques of the Qur'an and say, "How can you say that the Qur'an possesses great clarity, eloquent style and inimitable delivery when it says what is does about the tree of Zaqqum? *'Is that better hospitality or the tree of Zaqqum which We have made to be an ordeal for the wrongdoers? It is a tree that emerges from the depths of the Blazing Fire. Its fruits are just like the heads of shaytans.'* the Blazing Fire. Its fruits are just like the heads of shaytans.' 65) Every tree needs water and air, and contains life which appears by the greenness of its leaves. So how can a tree emerge from the Fire? Is that not an impossibility?"

We have seen neither the Tree of Zaqqum nor the heads of *shaytans*. Those who attack the Qur'an make fun of the fact that no one has seen the head of a *s h a y t a n* or the tree of Zaqqum. How can Allah use something unknown as a metaphor for something else unknown. Of what use is it to a listener to hear something unknown compared to another thing also unknown? We say to refute them: "Your hearts are covered and your nature does not appreciate the power of the Arabic tongue and that is what makes you fail to understand the eloquence of these words."

As an example, imagine that there is a contest between the cartoonists of the world to draw a picture of *S h a y t a n*. On the day when the prize is decided, there will be a lot of pictures, but the ugliest one will win. That is because criterion of victory here does not lie in beauty. Victory lies in the skill of the artist in depicting ugliness. So there are many depictions of ugliness in front of us. What do you think of Allah Almighty who desires to allow the imagination to imagine the tree of Zaqqum. How does he depict the head of shaytan? He desired by this eloquent depiction to allow the mind the maximum scope to picture the ugliness of the form of the tree from which the people of disbelief will eat.

The same applies to the words of the Almighty, *"If you could only see when they are standing before the Fire ..."* (6:27) There is no i n f o rmation here about what will happen to those who stand before the Fire. It is enough that Allah informs us that we will see them like this because the Last Day is the Day of Repayment, either in the Garden or in the Fire. The Garden, as we know from the words of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, contains "what no eye has seen or ear heard and what has not occurred to the heart of man." We know that human sight is limited and that the range of hearing is wider than that of sight. The ear can hear what cannot be seen with the eye but the eye can only see what is within the range of sight. Allah was not content with that alone so His Messenger r e p o rted that the Garden also contains what has "not occurred to the heart of man", i.e. there are things in the Garden which language cannot describe because language can only express people's human conception of things.

We know that there is no expression which could completely convey to the believers the bliss which the Garden contains and we also know that the Fire contains a punishment the ter r i b l e nature of which no expression could

possibly convey. If Allah had said, "If you could only see when they are standing before the F i re, you would see something terrible, fearful, humiliating," or some other expression which indicates the depth of the punishment, it would not convey what comes to mind when the resolution is withheld.

When we read " *when they are standing*" we know that it has a reality and a form of being and that someone will make them stand before the Fire. They are those who denied the Fire in this world and then on the Day of Rising they will find themselves among those whom Allah makes stand before the Fire so that they will see the punishment which awaits them and look at the Fire as we might look down onto something in this world. Certainly news about it came to them in this world.

If someone believes and knows that the one who tells him about something is definitely telling the truth, that constitutes "the knowledge of certainty". If a man passes that level of knowledge and actually sees the actual reality of what was described, that is "the eye of certainty". When he is informed by his Lord, the believer reaches things which he knows with certainty are fro m Allah because he believes his Lord. That is why Imam 'Ali used to say, "If the veil was lifted from me, I could not have more certainty" because he totally believed in what had been transmitted.

But what about the deniers? Everyone will see with "the eye of c e rtainty" on the Last Day, which is "the source of cer t a i n t y " . Believers and unbelievers will both share in that. But unbelievers will see the Fire with "the eye of certainty" and will enter it so that they will be burned by it and this for them will be "the truth of c e rtainty". So we know that the Fire is "a vision of cer t a i n t y " which both believers and unbelievers will see but the Fire is the "truth of certainty" only for the unbelievers who will experience it and be punished by it. Believers in the Garden, on the other hand, will experience the "truth of certainty" by experiencing and enjoying its bliss. Allah describes this in His words: *"No indeed, if you only knew with the Knowledge of C ert a i n t y, you will certainly see the Blazing Fire! Then you will certainly see it with the Eye of Certainty."* (102:5-7)

The truth of certainty comes in His words: *"But the truth is, if he is one of Those Brought Near, there is solace and sweetness and a G a rden of Delight and if he is one of the Companions of the Right, 'Peace be upon you!' from the Companions of the Right and if he is a denier and misguided, there is hospitality of scalding water*

and roasting in the Blazing Fire. This is indeed the Truth of Certainty." (56:88-95) What will the deniers do when they see the Fire with "the eye of certainty"? They must fear they will experience it as "the truth of certainty". This is why Allah tells us that they will say, *"Oh! If only we could be sent back again, we would not deny the Signs of our Lord and would be among the believers."* (6:27) They will want to return to this world to affirm their faith.

Sometimes hope involves wishing for the impossible. As the poet says:
O would that my youth would return one day
and I could inform him what it means to be white-haired!

They say, *"If only we could be sent back again."* The hope expressed here is an example of wishing for the impossible. It also contains the promise that they would not deny the Signs of Allah if they had another chance. But Allah assures us that it would not make any difference: *"And if they were sent back they would merely return to what they were forbidden to do. Truly they are liars."* (6:28) They seek to re t u rn to this world, not to carry out the p ro m i s e made in their impossible request, because they would do the same as they did before – reject, deny and disbelieve. They seek refuge in this statement due to their excessive fear of what Allah has promised them as a result of their disbelief in this world. The Day of Rising is also called "the Day of Disgrace" because man will be given his book and will be told, *"Read your Book! Today your own self is reckoner enough against you!"* (17:14)

In this world we can, as we know, make accurate audio and video r e c o rdings of events so how much more accurate will be Allah's recording of our whole lives? Man will have, on the Day of Rising, in sound and vision a complete record, however distasteful it may be to him, of every moment of his life. Every action he did will be shown to him by means which it will be impossible to deny. It is as if Allah makes clear to every person, "I will not call you to account; I will let you call yourself to account."

Suddenly a man's limbs will speak, testifying against him and his hands will say what they did and his tongue will say what it said. His feet will report where they took him. The limbs which followed the will of their possessor in this world will have a different stance in the Next World. They will not follow his will on the Last Day but will follow the will of the One who gave him his will: *" 'To whom does sovereignty belong today?' To Allah, the One, the Conqueror!"* (40:16)

An example of that can be seen in a raiding party or squadron commanded by a general. If he gives them the wrong commands, they will carry them out, but after the end of the battle, the C o m m a n d e r-in-Chief will question them and they will mention the chain of incorrect commands issued by their general. Beware of supposing that your body is under your command forever. You have control over it with an authority entrusted to you by Allah but He can strip that from you if He wishes in this world and on the Day of Rising your control over your parts will definitely end. In this world there are some instances when people's control over their bodies is removed to remind us of the absolute power of Allah over everything in existence. Sometimes you see people with lack of control over one or more of their limbs. That is a demonstration from Allah that man's control over his limbs is a gift from Allah.

Allah Almighty says about the unbelievers, *"No, it is simply that what they were concealing before has been shown to them,"* to expose their deceit in this world. Then Allah will reply to their expressed desire, which sprang from abasement and humiliation, their wish to re t u rn to this world. He says, *"And if they were sent back they would merely return to what they were forbidden to do. Truly they are liars."* So they are liars regarding their promise to believe if they were to be returned to this world. This is made clear in the words of the Almighty, *"They say, 'There is nothing but this life and we will not be raised again.'"* (6:29)

They did not accept faith in the course of their lives, ignoring the guidance to faith r e p resented by an or d e red and wisely arranged universe. They paid no attention to this order, organisation and arrangement, which also exists in the intricate interconnections of human relationships, whether the people concern e d are believers or atheists. We know that there are qualities which all people, believers and atheists, dislike. When an atheist steals from his neighbour, is he not punished? He receives punishment from his society. All societies have r e w a rds and punishments. Those deprived of faith are forced by events to set out laws themselves to regulate reward and punishment.

We find that it is natural and necessary for human beings to d e c l a re the criminality of those who violate good, beauty and o rder in the world even if they do not pay any attention to the Divine Guidance which makes clear the re w a rd and punishment for every action which protects man's honour. On the Day of Rising all human beings will stand in abasement and need, seeing their deeds set out in front of them: *"No, it is simply that what they w e re concealing before has*

been shown to them. And if they were sent back they would merely return to what they were forbidden to do. Truly they are liars." (6:28)

If they were to be returned to this world and had free choice, they would do exactly the same as they did the first time. They only deny this on the Last Day when they are utterly defeated. Before that they were saying: *"'There is nothing but this life and we will not be raised again.'"* (6:29) In this world they only believed in one life: the life of this world. One aspect of the stupidity of the people of disbelief is that they often refer to their life on earth as this life which means that it is logical to assume a next life following it. All of that will occur to them when they are standing before the Fire. The Fire is merely one of the forces of the Compeller, so how much greater will their fear be when they stand before the Creator of the Fire and the Lord of the worlds?

Allah says: *"If you could only see when they are standing before their Lord. He will say, 'Is this not the Truth?' They will say, 'Yes indeed, by our Lord!' He will say, 'Then taste the punishment because of your rejec tion.'"* (6:30) Then they will be afraid and bewildered and seek to return to the life of this world because they have seen their terrible destiny. Allah omitted the resolving clause when He described them standing before the Fire and so it is more appropriate here for us to leave it to the imagination to visualise the extent of the terror they will experience.

So we see them blamed when Allah asks them, *"Is this not the Truth?"* They are startled by the Divine Presence saying to them after they have experienced the Rising and standing at the Fire, *"Is this not the Truth?"* Allah Almighty does not ask them for an answer but simply an aff i rmation. He wants them to aff i rm the truth and they will say, "Yes," because the matter does not require pride, only simple admission. Allah poses this question with a negative so that no one will imagine that the answer is forced. The judgement of the Real is then handed down: *"Then taste the punish ment because of your disbelief."* Thus they will taste the punishment whose very existence they had previously denied. Tasting the punishment is not in any way a matter of force or compulsion because Allah does not wrong anyone by even an atom's weight. It is because they previously did what necessitated it that they will receive punishment for it.

Allah Almighty says after that: *"Those who deny the meeting with Allah have lost, until, when the Hour comes upon them suddenly, they will say, 'Alas for what we*

neglected there!' They will bear their burdens on their backs. How evil is what they bear!" (6:31) If capital is used wisely it will increase but there are also actions which lose wealth. When this happens it means a double loss: firstly because the capital is lost; secondly because there is loss of eff o rt as well. In the same way those who deny the meeting with Allah will have lost because they will have sold their eternal life for an immediate, i m p e rmanent, short - t e rm gain and will find that all their eff o r t s have been in vain. By way of example, you will find a farmer keeping two measures of wheat to store up for planting after the harvest. This means a little loss for the farmer; but it is a decrease for a future increase. When he puts those grains into the tilled earth, he finds that Allah makes it grow many times over. That farmer is happy to sell a smaller amount immediately in order to receive a large amount in the future.

This is the principle which informs the actions of an intelligent man. If he wants to increase the fruits of his action he must expend e f f o rt. If an action only brings him a little, he will not move. Because an intelligent person does not like loss, you see him always comparing and balancing the ef f o rt he makes with the results it will bring him. As for those who reject the encounter with Allah, they have lost themselves because they do not compare the two lives – the temporary and the permanent – because the period of our life in this world is temporary whereas the Next Life goes on forever.

We do not how long we will live in this world. The average life-span is seventy years but no one knows exactly how long he will be here. He has a limited life-span. It will come to an end and he will die and leave this world. But the life of the Next World is p e rmanent and has no end. It lasts fore v e r. We know that man's bliss in this world is largely dependent on the means he has. But the bliss of the Next World is solely dependent on the power of the Creator who is Allah. It is on this basis that the loss of the unbelievers is great, grave and lasting because they have no faith in Allah. *"Those who deny the meeting with Allah have lost, until, when the Hour comes upon them suddenly, they will say, 'Alas for what we neglected there!'"* (6:31)

The disbelief and denial of the unbelievers leads to nothing but loss. The Hour comes but it is not the end of their journey. It is only the beginning of their loss. Its sudden arrival is merely the beginning of a process for them. They are surprised by the existence of what they previously denied and realise that what they did in this world has made the punishment mandatory for them. It is the

beginning of a regret which they cannot conceal. That is why they say, *"Alas for what we neglected there!",* referring to what they failed to do and their waste of their lives in this world. Repayment in the Next World will be reflect how one behaves in this world. Those who behave well in this world will obtain the reward of the Next World, and those behave badly will incur the punishment of the Next World.

Those who are seduced by this world and do not believe in the Next World will say on the Day of Rising, *"Alas for what we neglected there!' They will bear their burdens on their backs."* Spiritual burdens in this world, namely sins, will become physical burdens there. That is so that their disgrace will be public. On the Day of Rising whoever stole from the booty will be resurrected carrying it on his back. On the Day of Rising whoever stole a cow will carry it. lowing, on his shoulder. Whoever stole a ton of iron will be resurrected on the Day of Rising carrying it on his back. That is how Allah will disgrace people on the Day of Rising and that is why Allah says, *"How evil is what they bear!"*

We know that they do not only bear their own burdens but also the burdens of those who modelled themselves on them. This is the burden of misguidance. They will all find that these burdens take on a physical form there. They will steer them to Hellfire . We know that the reality of every action will appear ther e . Whoever does righteous actions will find the good of his action. Whoever does evil will discover how evil his actions really were.

We see actual examples of that in our daily lives. There are, for instance, two brothers who are farmers. Each of them owns two hectares of land. The first gets up at dawn to care for his land and cultivate it and fertilise it and see to its irrigation and he continues to work hard in this way until harvest time. The other stays awake at night watching television and does not get up until after midday and does not attend to his land except with the minimum of effort. When harvest time comes, the first obtains the fruits of his labour by reaping an ample harvest while the other gets a meagre harvest plus regret for his neglect and laziness. So the intelligent person is the one who studies what his actions in this life will give him and chooses the type of action which will guarantee him happiness and peace of mind in both this world and the Next.

Chapter Two The People who will be in the Fire Forever People who are created for the Fire

" We created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts they do not understand with; they have eyes they do not see with; they have ears they do not hear with. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the heedless." (7:179) We know that in existence most things worship by their very nature
– everything, in fact, except mankind and the jinn, because both of them have choice. Regarding them, our Lord says about them in *Surat al-Rahman*: *"Soon We will settle your affairs, you two who are subject to account."*

Creation in this *ayat* means dissemination of them and making them many. The word "many" is not necessarily the opposite of "few". There may be "many" on both sides of a proposition. Allah says in His Noble Book: "Do *you not see that everyone in the heavens and everyone on the earth prostrates to Allah, and the sun and moon and stars and the mountains, trees and beasts..."* (22:18) All beings – inanimates, plants and animals – prostrate to Allah and glorify Him. But then the matter is divided when it reaches man, as Allah says in the same *ayat*: *"...and many of mankind. But many of them inevitably merit punishment."* This means that there are many people who prostrate and are humble to Allah and there a re also many who disbelieve and do not prostrate, and they deserve punishment.

When we see the words *" We created many of the jinn and mankind for (li) Hell"* the question occurs to us: "O Lord, if you c reated them for Hell, what can they possibly do about that? They have no power to do anything since You created them for that." Let us, however, look at the grammatical term *li* used here as "for", which is known in Arabic as "the *lam* of outcome". This usage allows the eventual result of a matter to take various forms and this is what is intended in this case, rather than indicating one specific purpose, because the purpose of the creation of the human being is the worship of Allah, as He makes clear when He says: *"I did not create either jinn or man except to worship Me."* (51:56) The meaning of worship is to obey the Lord's commands and to refrain from what He has forbidden. What is commanded is righteous, whether it is done or not. Worship, ther e f o r e , demands the existence of those who obey and those who disobey.

An example of this usage might be when someone who has only had a glimpse of a man's life says to you, "Why does he take this hostile stance towards you when it was you who promoted him to the position he now holds?" You reply to him "I promoted him so that (*li*) he could kick me in the teeth." It is clear that you did not mean that to happen when you promoted him but that was the final outcome. In the same way Allah did not create mankind for the sake of either the Garden or the Fire. He created them to worship Him. Some of them believe and act righteously and enter the Garden; others rebel and enter the Fir e . This is usage of the *lam* of outcome, meaning that the end result of the affair is not necessarily what was desired.

Another example illustrating this is when Allah said to the mother of Musa, *"'When you fear for him cast him into the sea. Do not fear or grieve; We will return him to you and make him one of the Messengers.' The family of Pharaoh picked him up so that (li) he might be an enemy to them."* (28:7-8) The family of Pharaoh clearly did not pick him up in order for him to be an enemy to them and, indeed, the wife of Pharaoh said, *"A source of delight for me and for you; do not kill him. It may well be that he will be of use to us..."* (28:9) The reason they picked him up was to be a delight but nevertheless he became an enemy in the end.

People who are created for the Fire

Similarly in the words of the Almighty, *" We created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell,"* it is expressed that their creation is not the cause of many of jinn and men entering the Fire because the basic reason for their creation was worship. But worship demands the disobedient as well as the obedient. Those who obey will enter the Garden and those who disobey will enter the Fire. You will recall the earlier example used about the Minister of Education asking the headmaster of a school or college about the standard of the students. The headmaster said, "We know very well who is going to fail and who will pass. If you wish, I will name them for you." The headmaster did not say this because he knows what the answers of the students will be. He knows what the results of their behaviour will be. Knowledge is a matter of disclosure not of effect. That is why the Almighty says, *"We created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell,"* meaning "We will gather many jinn and men to Hellfire. They are the ones who turned aside from Our Path."

Then Allah mentions the reasons why this will come to pass. He says first, *"They have hearts they do not understand with ."* Secondly, *"They have eyes they do not see with."* And thirdly, *"They have ears they do not hear with."* (7:179) It might be asked, "If their hearts are created so that they do not understand, then what is their sin? If their eyes are created so that they do not see, what is their sin? If their ears are created so that they do not hear, for what are they punished?" We reply that Allah did not cr e a t e them in order to punish them but their hearts were preoccupied with their overpowering appetites and their intellects did not reflect on anything else. Their plans were solely devoted to satisfying their appetites in this world. The same applies to their eyes which only look at what they desire and to their ears which only hear what they want to hear.

The diff e rence between the understanding of the heart, the sight of the eye and the hearing of the ear is that the understanding of the heart depends on what is conveyed to it by faculties of p e rception. Perception, ther e f o re, is achieved through the five senses. We know, there f o re, by touch that silk is soft and we know by smell that the scent of musk is fragrant and we know by taste that honey is sweet. Perception comes through sensations which are interpreted by the heart which in turn produces action after the exercise of the intellect.

The des cending levels of the Fire and their inhabitants

Allah says, *"The hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire. You will not find any helper for them."* (4:145) To return to the fineness of the Qur'anic teaching, nowhere in His Book does Allah have any section which deals with the hypocrites alone. Rather He alludes first to the hypocrites and then to the believers so that the reader will be averse to the position of the hypocrites and love the attributes of the believers. Allah says: *"The hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire. You will not find any helper for them."* (4:145) The word used for level is '*d a r a k*' and always refers to descending levels. The fate of the righteous is distinguished from it by the use of a different term, as Ibn Kathir points out, "The Fire has descending levels (*darak*) and the Garden has ascending levels (*duruj*)."

In modern times, land is measured by marking ascending contours from sea level. Spirit levels are also used. When rain falls on a road it becomes evident whether the work of the contractor who laid the road was well done or not. A bucket of

water can be splashed into a pool after it has been tiled to discover whether the work was good or bad. There is a common Egyptian saying: "The plasterer exposes the builder." If the wall is not flat, the plasterer will have to fill in gaps and cracks so that the surface of the wall is even. The one who exposes the quality of the work of the plasterer is the painter because he will either have to use a lot paint to cover up uneven areas on the wall or he will find it easy to paint. What exposes the quality of the painter's work are natural things like dust. A painter who wants to cheat h u rries to leave his work because the dust in the air descends vertically and if a wall is badly painted the dust will show up on it. Allah exposes the one who does not do his work well. E v e r ythi ng r e t u r ns to All ah a nd every one reaches Al lah Almighty exposed and disgraced except for the believers who do righteous deeds: Allah will veil them by their righteous actions.

"The hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire. You will not find any helper for them." (4:145) The Almighty already gave us the picture of the fluctuating hypocrites who do not remain firm in any opinion. There is nothing about them that earns respect in the society in which they live. Allah says about them, *"They vacil late between the two – not joining these or joining those."* (4 : 1 4 3) Vacillation is a characteristic of a personality which has no intrinsic stability. Since Allah described the hypcrites in this manner, it is clear that their final repayment befits their actions. Allah prepared people's minds to accept this judgement so that people would not feel compassion or mercy for them.

When Allah decrees a judgement, He guarantees by His selfsubsistence and oneness that there will be no one who can contradict it. When He says, "I will put him in the lowest level of the Fire," there is no other power which can extricate the hypocrite from his fate. That is why Allah follows the judgement with His words *"You will not find any helper for them."* This means that the judgement is inextricable from its implementation and none of Allah's creatures can avert it. Glory be to the One who alone rules His kingdom! Allah has lent sovereignty to some people in this world but in the Next World, no one but Allah will have any authority. *"To whom does sovereignty belong today? To Allah, the One, the Conqueror!"* (40:16)

After that Allah ordained that some hypocrites would proclaim their faith and repent of what they have done. Allah has destined that they will examine themselves and call themselves to account. So the door is not closed to them. He says: *"Except those who repent and put things right and hold fast to Allah and*

dedicate their deen to Allah alone. They are with the believers. Allah will give the believers an immense reward." (4:146) So it is possible for there to be a change of heart which may move a hypocrite to repent and so that no one should think that the judgement here is absolutely final. This is so that no hypocrite will throw off all restraint and involve himself in more evil.

Allah says, *"except those who repent,"* meaning those who turn away from their first hypocrisy. Then if any corruption was a result of his earlier hypocrisy, he must put it right, cling to Allah, and turn sincerely to Allah in intention and action. *"Except those who repent and put things right and hold fast to Allah and dedicate their deen to Allah alone."* Thus the preconditions of salvation from the lowest level of the Fire are: repentance, putting right what was corrupted, clinging to Allah, and being sincere in dedicating oneself to Allah. Repentance here means refraining from hypocrisy.

What is clear is that those who repent, put things right and cling to Allah have fulfilled the pillars of sure belief in Allah, but Allah also says, *"they dedicate their deen to Allah alone."* Why is sincerity stressed more than action here? It is because the hypocrisy first springs from the heart. We know that the heart sins first and then the sins of the limbs follow. An example of this is when the eye sins when it looks at forbidden things or the tongue sins when it abuses or curses people. Each limb has a scope for disobedience. Here the scope of the heart is hypocrisy, which is a hidden matter. Therefore Allah says, *"they dedicate their* deen *to Allah alone."* This stresses the necessity of sincere r e p e n t a n c e from hypocrisy and that the locus of hypocrisy is the heart.

So repentance of the heart is not the same as repentance of the limbs. Repentance of the limbs is for the limbs to r e f r a i n from the ways in which they disobey. Repentance of the heart is to refrain from hypocrisy by being sincere. That is why Allah confirmed the virtue of the believers who do not immerse themselves in hypocrisy. He put the hypocrites who repent together with the believers. So it is as if the basis for bliss and obtaining the great reward is being with the believers: *"They are with the believers. Allah will give the believers an immense reward."*

Allah Almighty says: *"Such people are the true unbelievers. We have prepared a humiliating punishment for the unbelievers."* (4:151)

What is meant by this is that the reality of total disbelief exists in them in response to those who say, "Can there be a 'true' unbeliever and some other kind of unbeliever?" It is possible that someone who does not believe in all the Divine Messages may have some excuse because he did not have any knowledge of the Messengers who conveyed them. But if someone knows the Messenger who is the conduit of Revelation and then disbelieves, his disbelief is heinous and far worse: *"Such people are the tr u e unbelievers."*

We notice that when Allah speaks about the unbelievers, He does not separate them from the judgement and requital which awaits them. The judgement is found mentioned with them in the same *a y a t*. Allah does not move the judgement to another *a y a t*, *"Such people are the true unbelievers. We have pr e p a red a humiliating punishment for the unbelievers."* (4:151) Here He mentions the repayment for disbelief connected directly to that disbelief. Glory be to Him who has prepared the humiliating punishment for the unbelievers without delaying it.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says, "The Garden was shown to me. If I had wished, I could have brought you bunches from it." Allah has already prepared the Garden and the Fire and showed it to the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. If the Messenger had wished to bring the believers bunches of the fruit of the Garden, he could have done so. Beware of believing that Allah will leave things until the Final Hour and then will see each person who disbelieved and then prepare the punishment for them according to their number, or that the believers will have Gardens and bliss prepared for them according to their number.

Allah has pr e p a red the Garden on the basis that all people will believe and have a place in the it and He has prepared the Fire on the basis that all people will reject and have a place there. Then believers will come in the Next World and take the place p re p a red for them and will also take some of the places in the G a rden which were pr e p a red for those who disbelieved, in accordance with the words of Allah Almighty, *"such people are the inheritors who inherit Paradise, remaining in it timelessly, f ore v e r. "* (23:10-11) And we find the question being asked of the Fire in the Next World, *"The Day when We say to Hell, 'Are you full?' it will ask, 'Are there more to come?'"* (50:30)

The Fire asks for more on account of the places which are prepared for those who will not enter it because they believed in Allah. Those who believed will inherit the places which were prepared for those who did not enter the Garden because they rejected Allah and His Messengers and diff e rentiated between Allah and His Messengers, saying, "*We believe in some and we reject some*." Their recompense will be according to their conduct.

The unbelievers and wrongdoers

Allah Almighty says, *"Allah will not forgive those who disbelieve and do wrong or guide them on any path, except the path of Hell, remaining in it timelessly, forever without end. That is easy for A l l a h . "* (4:168-169) Here the account begins with disbelief and wrongdoing, *"those who disbelieve and do wrong."* Disbelief (*kufr*) is covering up the existence of Allah. Wrongdoing (*dhulm*) is to live according to a human programme which does not lead to enjoyment or happiness in this world. Thus they wrong themselves. Eventually this path inevitably takes them to the punishment of the Next World. Anyone who covers up the existence of Allah and deprives himself by thereby covering up the Path which Allah has brought, is very much misguided:

"But when guidance comes to you from Me, all those who follow My guidance, will not go astray and they will not be miserable." (20:123) And there is another *a y a t* w h e re the Almighty says: *"Those who follow My guidance will feel no fear and know no sorro w."* (2 : 3 8) Anyone who follows his own passion and a human programme will have a very narrow and constricted life. Let no one suppose that someone who deals with things according to his own passion has freedom of action without limits and rest without end. No

Replacing the skins of unbelievers

indeed! Those who do that may have rest for a time but then will encounter trouble and never be free of it after that. Thus they wrong themselves.

Someone who disbelieves and does not follow the Path of Allah allows his appetites to overwhelm his values. Islam came to set up a balance between the two so that they are mutually supp o rting in the human soul and one does not transgress against the other. *"Allah will not forgive those who disbelieve and do wrong or guide them on any path, except the path of Hell, remaining in it*

timelessly, forever without end. That is easy for Allah." (4:168-169) Such is the judgement of Allah re g a rding those who disbelieve and wrong themselves: they will not gain Allah's forgiveness and in front of them is only the Path of Hellfire in which they will remain for all eternity.

The replacing of the skins of the unbelievers in the Fire

Allah Almighty says: *"As for those who reject Our Signs, We will roast them in a Fire. Every time their skins are burned off, We will replace them with new skins so that they can taste the punishment. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise."* (4:56) "We will roast" comes from the root meaning "to be exposed to heat". All of us know that when fire burns something in this world, it ceases to exist, and when it no longer exists, it no longer feels pain. Attention is drawn to this fact by what Allah says about this matter, *"Every time their skins are burned off, We will replace them with new skins so that they can taste the punishment."* So the punishment of the Next World is not like fire in this world because fire in this world b u rns, and that is the end of the matter. The Fire of the Next World, on the other hand, is an eternal punishment, constant and repeated.

"Every time their skins are burned off, We will replace them with new skins so that they can taste the punishment." When the skins are burned there, there are other skins which will come and replace them. It is not the limbs but the conscious soul that experiences pain. Evidence can be found for this in medicine. The conscious soul can be anaesthetised so that although there is pain it does not feel it. An excruciatingly painful boil can be opened with a scalpel without the anaesthetised person feeling any pain. Similarly we find that the punishment of the Next World is not in fact directed against the skin and limbs. They simply convey it to the true object of punishment which is the conscious soul. This is indicated by the fact that our skin and limbs will be called upon to testify against us on the Day of Rising. They will testify against their owners and will be a means of conveying the punishment and they will be happy to do so.

The repayment of unbelievers is the Fire

Allah Almighty says, *"Those who disbelieve spend their wealth to bar access to the Way of Allah. They will spend it; then will regret it; then will be over t h rown. Those who disbelieve will be gathered into Hell."* (8:36) Allah makes it clear in this *ayat* that such unbelievers rejected Allah and spent their wealth to bar access to

the Way of Allah but they still did not achieve what they desired and they still were not successful in obstructing access to the Way of Allah. Allah deludes the unbelievers by allowing them to continue to expend against faith and so they lose their wealth and are filled with painful regret.

"But those who disbelieve and deny Our Signs, are the Companions of the Blaz ing Fire." (5:10) When we see the words, *" T h e Companions of the Blazing Fire,"* our souls quake in terror at that p rospect. "Companions" indicates mutual cohesion and mutual connection. They are joined together and so Hellfire cannot not leave them and they cannot leave Hellfire. Hell itself is yearning for them. On the Day of Rising Hellfire will have two actions. The first is the accompaniment from which the unbelievers cannot part and the second is not allowing the unbelievers any opportunity to get free of it. *"The Day when We say to Hell, 'Are you full?' it will ask, 'Are there more to come?'"* (50:30)

When they hear the words of Almighty: *"They will spend it; then will regret it; then will be overthrown. Those who reject will be gathered into Hell"* (8:36), they do not notice the fact that Allah speaks about the future and that whatever unbelievers expend against the *d e e n* of Allah, will not achieve the slightest r e s u l t . This, then, is the action of people who lack insight and intelligence. Then the Qur'an re p o rts the words of Allah, "they will spend it", meaning that they will spend in the future. The future has two stages: the immediate future and the distant future. If the future is immediate, one says, "they will spend it," and for the distant future, in Arabic, *'sawfa'* is put before the verb. When Allah speaks about the immense punishment in Hell which will befall the unbelievers, He does not desire by this r e p o rt that their final destination should be the Fire, but He desires to frighten and alarm them about their disbelief, to call them to faith and to encourage them not to disbelieve so that they will not be gathered into Hell.

Allah Almighty says: *"So that Allah can sift the bad out from the good, and pile the bad on top of one another, heaping them all together, and tip them into Hell. They are the lost."* (8:37) This noble *a y a t* shows us that the battles between the Muslims and the enemies of Islam are battles which are willed by Allah Almighty. This is because the turmoil which occurs, even to the believers, purifies faith. An example of that is evident following the event of the Night Journey when those whose faith was weak asked one another, "Is it feasible that Muhammad could go to Jerusalem in a night?" whereas those with firm faith,

like Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, declared, "If he said it, he spoke the truth." Those with strong firm faith believe. Those without firm faith deny. Such is the situation with all events in Islam. All of them happen to distinguish the corrupt from the good and to collect the corrupt together into one mass which Allah will then consign to the Fire. These events happen as tests. It is like putting iron in the fire to remove impurity from it so that it becomes pure. Islam comes to purify the hearts of the believers and strengthen their faith because they bear the Message of Allah Almighty to the entire earth after being purified.

"So that Allah can sift the bad out from the good, and pile the bad on top of one another, heaping them all together, and tip them into Hell. They are the lost." (8:37) Allah Almighty gave us many examples of events which distinguish the corrupt from the good. In o r d i n a ry circumstances, the true nature of people does not appear because when people are safe and do not have to confront d a n g e r, they claim to possess courage, nobility, and boldness. They claim to have great faith ready for any sacrifice in the Way of Allah. Then events happen which test what is truly in their hearts.

A man may say to his friend, "I and my pr o p e rty are all yours." But when a misfortune befalls his friend, he flees fr o m him. That is how Allah Almighty desires to distinguish the corrupt from the good and likewise the believers are tested through particular events. The covering is removed from those with fragile belief so that they become witnesses against themselves, and the believers, those with pure hearts and faith, remain true to their claims. Allah desires to sift out the good so that it is not mixed with the corrupt. The corrupt fall into various aspects and types. One is corrupt for one reason and another for another reason but all of them will be unveiled and then Allah will gather all of them together and consign them all to the Fire.

The Almighty says: *"If only you could see when the angels take back those who disbelieved at their death, beating their faces and their backs: 'Taste the punishment of the Burning!'"* (8:50) Notice in this passage that the complementary proposition of the 'if' clause is omitted. It indicates that if the veil were to be removed and you could see the angels when they take those who disbelieve, you would see something terrible. Does this occur when they are fighting and the unbelievers are slain in battle and the angels meet them dealing them lethal blows or is it at the moment of their natural death? Both are possible.

The punishment here happens as first the unbelievers advance and then try to flee. That is why the Almighty says: *"beating their faces and their backs."* They strike the faces of those who are advancing toward them. When they turn their faces to protect themselves from the beating, the angels beat them on the back. The unbelievers used to punish the believers in this way. When one of the believers advanced to them, they beat his face, and when he tried to flee, they beat his back and head. Allah will make the unbelievers taste what they did to the believers but the difference is that the unbelievers acted with their limited human strength while the angels will beat them with unlimited angelic force. It is said that the angels have iron bars with which they hit the faces and backs of the unbelievers. When the iron strikes the body, sparks fly from the force of the blow and burn the bodies of the unbelievers. That is why Allah Almighty says, *" Taste the punishment of the Burning!"* (8:50)

A Companion came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, "Messenger of Allah, I d reamt that there was something looking like sandal straps on Abu Jahl's back," meaning the marks of a severe beating was clear on his body. The Messenger of Allah said, "That is the beating of the angels." Another Companion came and said, "Messenger of Allah, I meant to kill so-and-so and I came at him with my sword but before my sword could reach his throat, I saw his head twisted right round on his neck." The Messenger of Allah told him, "The angel beat you to him." That confirms the words of the Almighty: "When *your Lord revealed to the angels, 'I am with you so make those who believe firm. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who reject, so strike their necks and strike all their finger joints!'"* (8:12)

Allah says: *"If only you could see when the angels take back those who rejected at their death, beating their faces and their backs."* (8:50) The beating contains as much humiliation as physical pain. When someone commits a crime and is arrested and punished, he may bear the punishment with fortitude, but when he is beaten in front of people, the humiliation is greater torment for him than the physical punishment. But in any case this beating and humiliation does not save them from the punishment of the Fire. They will enter the greater punishment on the Day of Rising. This is a logical result of what the unbelievers did by not believing in Allah, inflicting injury on the believers, and bringing about corruption on earth.

Allah Almighty says: *"We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve because of their associating partners with Allah for which He has not sent down any authority. Their shelter will be the Fire. How evil is the abode of the wrongdoers!"* (3:151) Allah actually did cast terror into their hearts, as when they said to Abu Sufyan, "Muhammad is coming against you with an immense army from Madina. Fighters have joined him who have not fought before. They are coming against you at Hamra al-Asad." What did Abu Sufyan and his people do? Allah cast terror into their hearts and they fled.

The words, "We will cast" is taken from the verb to cast (ilqa') and it is only used with a subject and an object. The Qur'an clarifies this for us when Allah Almighty says: *"He threw down* (ilqa') *the Tablets and seized hold of his brother's head, dragging him towards him. Harun said, 'Son of my mother! The p eople o p p ressed me..."* (7:150) It refers to something material. We say that someone "casts a stone". The Almighty also says: *" T h e y t h rew down* (i l q a ') *their ropes and staffs and said, 'By the might of Pharaoh we are the winners.'"* (26:44) The ropes were material things. Allah Almighty says regarding the mother of Musa, *"We revealed to Musa's mother, 'Suckle him and then when you fear for him cast* (ilqa') *him into the sea. Do not fear or grieve; We will return him to you and make him one of the Messengers.'"* (28:7)

So casting is a physical matter. Allah wants to convey that meaning in connection with terror. He is saying, "I will gather fear together and cast it into the heart," in an almost physical way. When terror penetrates the heart, one becomes dispirited. When this dispiritedness settles in the heart, it causes fatigue to seep into all the limbs. He says, *"We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve."* So it is as if He is physicalising terror for us although terror is an immaterial thing, taking the form of an intense fear of everything.

"We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve." Look at the expressions which come from Allah. In this *ayat* He uses the first person plural to refer to Himself – the royal we – in "***We** will cast,*" and we see that Allah often speaks about a matter which will definitely happen in this way. He says: *"It is We who have sent down the Reminder and We will preserve it."* (15:9) This f o rm is used because the sending down of the Reminder is an immense action. That is why He uses it: "We have sent it down with power. We have sent it down with wisdom; We have sent it down with knowledge; We have sent it down with

hearing; We have sent it down with sight; We have sent it down with contraction; and We have sent it down with expansion."

He does sometimes speak about the Sublime Essence in the first person and says *"I am indeed Allah"* and does not say "We", but when speaking about the Revelation He says: *"Truly We sent it down on the Night of Power."* (97:1) That is because this is an immense majestic action. So this form can be used for an event which occurs. That is why the Almighty says, *"We will cast terror into the hearts of those who re j e c t ."* Each heart that disbelieves in Him needs to have fear cast into it and the first person plural form is used to show that every disbelieving heart is included in the action.

Allah Almighty does not wrong such people by casting terror into their hearts; they deserve it. Why? "*Because of their associat ing part n e r s ... "* Associating partners with Allah is what induces their terror because Allah acts but the partners cannot act. If their partners were real, they would not abandon them. Terror overcomes them because their protectors have no reality. If their false gods had power as they claim, they would have said to them, "The Lord of Muhammad is doing this to us. Why do you not stop him?" But the partners they associated with Allah have no power to harm or help. Indeed, they are more likely to harm than to benefit.

"Because of their attributing partners to Allah for which He has not sent down any authority." Authority (*s u l t a n*) means st re n g t h , proof, and evidence. We say, "So-and-so has power (*sulta*) over someone," meaning He can compel him to do something by his power over him so *sulta* means the strength and power to compel action. In the realm of ideas, it means evidence and proof. The believers always have *sulta* f rom Allah because they are helped physically by Him and if they are defeated physically, they still have the power of the Truth and evidence. That is why Iblis will come on the Day of Rising and say: *"I had no authority* (s u l t a) *over you except that I called you, and you responded to me. Therefore do not blame me but blame yourselves."* (14:22) There are, as we have said, two kinds of authority (*sulta*): a power which can compel us to do an act of disobedience, or evidence and proof which can persuade us carry out the act of disobedience.

The difference between overpowering power and the authority of evidence is that overpowering power forces you act and you a re compelled to do so without consenting to the action. The authority of evidence, on the other hand, can only

convince you to act and then you do it with consent. So the authority of power makes you perform an action whether you want to or not while the authority of evidence has to convince you to act. In the Next World Shaytan will admit about himself regarding that: *"I had no authority over you,"* i.e. either power to force you to disobey or, indeed, evidence with which to convince you to disobey. What happened then? Shaytan's words are: *"I had no authority over you except that I called you, and you responded to me."* This means: "You obeyed me and responded to my call without my having the authority of power which might have forced you to do something or the authority of evidence which might have convinced you to do so."

Allah then says, *"Their shelter will be the Fire. How evil is the abode of the w ro n g d o e r s ! "* This means that the place where they seek refuge will be the Fire. A 'shelter' is a place to which you hope to return. It is as if in this place of retreat there is a magnetic attraction for the unbeliever which hurtles him into the F i re. That is why we must note the words of Allah in some places: "*to it you will return,*" "*to it you will be returned,*" and "*an evil resting place for the wr o n g d o e r s .*" It is a resting place after which there is no more movement ever. We can move on from every resting place but the Fire, which is the resting place where the wrongdoers will remain forever and what an evil r e s t i n g place that is.

Allah Almighty says, " *Some of them believe in him, and some bar access to him. Hell will be enough as a Searing Blaze!"* (4:55) What is meant here is belief in that which was brought by Ibrahim and the Messengers w ho came after him to whom Allah gave prophethood. *"Some of them"* might also mean that some of the People of the Book believe in the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, like 'Abdullah ibn Sallam and Ka'b al-Ahbar. *"Some of them bar access to him"* means that some of them reject the Path of Allah. That is why Allah continues with "*Hell will be enough as a Searing Blaze!"* It is as if the result of b a rring access to Allah's Path can only be the ensuing punishment of Hell whose fire will burn and sear them, as a repayment for what they were doing.

"Allah does not forgive partners being associated with Him but He forgives whoever He wills for anything apart from that. Anyone who associates partners with Allah has committed a terrible crime." (4:48) This is one of the *ayats* of greatest hope in the Book of Allah and it is why, when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked about the causes of faith, he replied, "Whoever says, 'There is no god but Allah' will enter the Garden." 'Uthman,

may be Allah be pleased with him, reported as well that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said "Whoever dies knowing that there is no god but Allah will enter the Garden."

Allah Almighty makes it clear that the basis of faith is the recognition that Allah is the One God who has no part n e r. When you acknowledge that He is the One God who has no partner you enter the sanctuary of security. To reaffirm this, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said in a *h a d i t h*, "Anyone who meets Allah with the testimony that there is no god but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah, without having any doubt about it, will enter the Garden."

When Abu Dharr spoke to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, about this *a y a t*, the Prophet told him, " T h e re is no slave who says, 'There is no god but Allah' and then dies holding to that but that he will enter the Garden." He said, "Even if he fornicates and steals?" The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "Even if he for n i c a t e s and steals." Abu Dharr asked, "Even if he fornicates, and if he steals?" He said the same three times and on the fourth he said, "In spite of Abu Dharr!"

Abu Dharr was jealous for the limits set by Allah. When the Messenger of Allah said, "In spite of Abu Dharr!" did this make Abu Dharr sad? Certainly not and that is why he reported it and said, "Whoever says 'There is no god but Allah' will enter the Garden despite Abu Dharr!" and he was happy because the door of Allah's mercy had been opened. If that were not the case, what would be the difference between the one who believed it and said and the one who did not say it? There must be a distinction.

No ransom is accepted from the unbelievers

Allah Almighty says: *"As for those who disbelieve, if they had everything on the earth and the same again with it to ransom them selves from the punishment of the Day of Rising, it would not be accepted from them. They will have a painful punishment."* (5 : 3 6) This *ayat* follows what Allah Almighty has mentioned of punishments, retaliation, execution and amputation; then He moves us from this arena to our fear of Allah. We must seek the means to come near to Allah and strive in His way until we are successful. Then Allah will r e w a rd us. The punishments mentioned, like retaliation and execution are temporal

punishments but the punishment which comes in the Next World is far worse and more severe.

We can imagine a disbelieving society which, in the world, is powerful and exalted through tyranny but how will the people of this society be addressed on the Day of Rising? "You were able to use your strength to tyrannise others because in this world the strong can destroy and escape punishment. But the strength you had was something given to you by Allah and it is part of the practice of Allah to allow it to be exercised. Glory be to Him who ordained His practice and permitted people to exploit the gifts they have been given. Enjoy the fruits of your efforts. But

No ransom accepted

on the Day of Rising you will know that the means are not inherently yours and that your strength was nothing more than a gift from Allah. Here you are standing in the place of witnessing. If you had everything in the world, or even double that, and were to offer it as a ransom to save you from the punishment of Hell, Allah would not accept it. That is the peak of humiliation. You can do nothing to save yourselves from the punishment of Hell."

This place of witnessing makes the soul aware that the matter is not a game or a jest but something very serious indeed. The human being should weigh the punishment before he commits the crime. One of the things which makes people worsen in p rodigality against themselves is that they divorce crime fro m punishment. If, before someone was prodigal against himself, he only made the connection between the punishment and the crime, he would certainly not commit the crime. It is the same when someone is too lazy to obey Allah. If he were only to connect the act with its reward, he would rush to do it. The problem is that people separate their acts from their consequences and fail to connect their crimes to the punishment and their good actions to the reward. If we were to place an act of disobedience face to face with its consequences, no one would ever commit it nor would anyone neglect an act of obedience.

Allah Almighty says: *"They will want to get out of the Fire but they will not be able to. They will have an everlasting punishment."* (5:37) Whenever the heat of the Fire touches them, they will want to get out of it, but how can they think there is a possibility of getting out of the Fire? When they are being burned and t u rned

here and there, there must be a moment when the tongues of flame push them close to coming out and they think that the punishment is going to end. Does not Allah say when he gives a concrete form to the dreadfulness of the Hellfire? *"If they call for help, they will be helped ..."* (18:29) This first phrase appears to allude to a mercy which they will be granted but after that the full horror is depicted and embodied: *"they will be helped with water like seething molten brass, frying their faces."* (18:29) This is the summit of horror. They begin with hope and end in utter agony and despair.

An example of a similar instance would be a thirsty prisoner who asks for a glass of water. The jailer might simply punish him by refusing to give him water. But if the jailer wanted to punish him more, he would say, "I will bring you water," then he would bring him a glass of cold water but, as the prisoner stretched his hand to get it, pour it out onto the ground. This is beginning with hope and ending with despair. The effect of hope in the soul is anticipation of pardon and so there is a feeling of relief – but the result in this case is: *"a painful punishment."*

Allah Almighty says, *"If only they had implemented the To r a h and the Injil and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have eaten from above their heads and beneath their feet. Among them there is a moderate group but what most of them do is evil."* (5:66) This means that if the Jews and Christians implemented the Torah and Injil without twisting it and believed in the Qur'an, that would be better for them. The Torah is the Book of the Jews and the Injil is the book of 'Isa, peace be upon him. After these, Allah revealed the universal impregnable Book, which is the Noble Qur'an. Allah wanted them to believe in the good news of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, mentioned in the Torah and Gospel; because the Torah, before they altered it, called for belief in Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and in what Allah revealed to him and, as we know, the Jews told the Arabs that the Messenger of Allah was coming.

The People of the Book possess a natural means of access to belief in the Qur'an, because the sound Torah and sound Gospel contain a description of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. 'Abdullah ibn Sallam, one of the Jewish rabbis, used to say, "I recognised Muhammad when I saw him as I would recognise my own son. Indeed, my recognition of Muhammad was clearer." Allah promised the People of the Book that, if they

believed in and feared Him, He would expiate their evil deeds for them and admit them into Gardens of Bliss. Glory be to the One who has more knowledge of them and knows that some of them are materialists attached to this world. This is why He grants them the blessings of this world. The believers take hold of the means, acknowledging that they are a gift from Allah, and receive the blessings of this world and the Next. Unbelievers take hold of the means without thanking the Creator for them.

The Jews say, *"The Fire will only touch us for a number of days."* (2:80) They suppose that Allah will only punish them for worshipping the Calf and not for anything else. This supposition is erroneous. There is no question of Allah saving some people no matter what their actions. The fact is that every human being will have to account for all his actions. It is extrao rd i n a ry that they have this false understanding and do not consider the matter in a sound way, despite the fact that they are people who excel in intellectual things.

The news received by the hypocrites

Allah Almighty says, *"Give good news to the hypocrites that they will have a painful punishment."* (4:138) The quality of vacillation and wavering between belief and disbelief is not found in someone who is firm in faith. It is a characteristic of a hypocrite. Reasons occur to him and he believes and then counter arg uments are presented to him and he disbelieves. A hypocrite declares his Islam while concealing disbelief and hypocrisy. The word for hypocrisy in Arabic is *nifaq* which is derived from the word *nafaqa',* which means the burrow of the jerboa. The jerboa is a desert cre a t u re which tricks animals that try to harm it by having two entrances to its burro w. It goes in by one entrance and leaves by the other.

" *Give good news to the hypocrites*..." The word used for giving news is *b a s h a r a* which normally refers to something good to come. Do the hypocrites receive good news? No, their good news is in fact news of something bad. What we would expect is for the hypocrites to be warned, not given good news, but in his eloquent style Allah uses expressions which heighten the punishment. If he had said, "I warn them of a painful punishment," the words would have made them ready to hear about their evil fate. But Allah says, *"Give good news to the hypocrites that they will have a painful punishment."* That is mockery, ridicule, and scor n . Sometimes we notice that incongruity can give us a more vivid picture than the

plain reality. For instance, if you go to a miser and say to him, "Hello, Hatim!"[1] what is the reaction of the one who receives such a greeting?

You move from the reality of a miser to the image of Hatim at-Ta'i, the paradigm of generosity. If you call a miser 'Hatim', that is rebuke, mockery and derision because you transpose him from the vile baseness of his real nature to the opposite quality, which is lofty, high and great. By doing this you in fact demean and mock him. The comparison makes the hugeness of the disparity more obvious. The same applies if you address a very tall man with "Hello, shorty." It emphasises the man's tallness.

This is a rhetorical device to convey more vividly the meaning intended by the speaker. So the words of the Almighty, *"Give good news to the hypocrites"* mean "O hypocrites, through your hypocrisy you have gained what you wanted for yourselves. You know what the results of hypocrisy are so it must be that you love punishment and remain hypocrites because you love punishment. So I give you the good news that you will be punished."

When he is told of good news, a listener naturally thinks that there is something good on the way. Then when Allah says, *"that they will have a painful punishment,"* it means that their distr e s s will be compounded. Allah delights them first with "good news" and then dashes their joy by warning them of their impending punishment. An example of this can be seen in a father who tells his son to revise so that he will not fail his exams but the son continues to play. Then the exams come and go and the father attends the school on the day the results are announced and finds that his son has indeed failed. The father says sarcastically to his s o n, "C on g r atu l ati o ns , y o u ha ve fa i l ed th e exa m. "

1. Hatim's generosity was proverbial.

"Congratulations" expands the son because he expects to hear good but then he hears, "You have failed," and he experiences contraction.

Good news, as he said, gives the impression that there is something good on the way but here there is news which is not good. That resembles what Allah says in another *a y a t* w h i c h describes the punishment of the unbeliever on the Day of Rising and how the punishment will be intensified for them: *"If they call for help, they will be helped with water..."* (18:29). Hearing this, we expect the

coolness of mercy to come to them, but the help which they are given is *"like seething molten brass."* The listener or reader asks himself, "Is this help or tort u re?" This depicts the intensified punishment, for the water they receive is like molten brass which makes their internal torture more intense.

The intensity of a punishment, as we know, depends on the p u n i s h e r. If the punisher has limited strength, the punishment will also be limited. But if the punisher has unlimited strength, the punishment will not be limited. When the deliverer of the punishment is Allah, the source of all strength, what kind of punishment will that be? The punishment is sometimes described as being painful, sometimes as humiliating, and sometimes as immense. It has all these qualities, but each attribute indicates a particular aspect of it.

Pain is the soul's sensation of something hurting the body. Immense punishment is the punishment which reaches the pinnacle of possible intensity. This pinnacle may be reached while the one being punished is undergoing it. The punishment of Allah is beyond the endurance of the one receiving it. He is unable to bear the pain because, however stoic a person is he cannot ward off such pain. It may be that the soul will be able to bear the pain but will then collapse when the punishment becomes humiliating. Because the hypocrites and unbelievers are immersed in materialism, Allah prefers to describe the punishment as painful because pain is experienced in this world.

Good news of the punishment

"Those who kill the Prophets without any legal right, and kill those who command justice, give them good news of a painful punishment." (3:21) Why does Allah give good news of a painful punishment? Does not giving good news mean to inform someone of something pleasant on the way? Good news usually refers to something good, like Allah giving the believers the good news of the G a rden. When this happens Allah informs them of something good coming to them and then gives them help in carrying out the necessary actions which ensure that they will receive the reward which the good news announces.

Those who killed the Prophets who commanded justice were not contemporary with the revelation of this *ayat.* Those cont e m p o r a ry with the Revelation were the descendants of those who killed the Prophets. Allah gives them good news of a painful punishment because they think that what their ancestors did

was correct. So the scope of punishment is also expanded to include them. But why is the punishment good news for them when the p rocess of painful punishment is certainly not good? It has a l ready been discussed how the sudden hope generated by the e x p ression "good news" followed up immediately by the stark and terrible truth makes the sensation of the affliction worse. If Allah had warned them and threatened them from the beginning, the arrival of the painful news would have been easier to bear.

It will be so for those who killed the Prophets and their descendants who believe the same as what those killers believed. *"Give them good news of a painful punishment."* The word 'punishment' means the causing of pain to a living cre a t u re who feels pain. In the case of killing, the conscious self is wiped out, so this is not punishment in this sense. Punishment continues as long as the person is alive and feels and is aware of the pain caused by it. The Almighty says: *"As for those who reject Our Signs, We will roast them in a Fire. Every time their skins are burned off, We will replace them with new skins so that they can taste the punishment. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise."* (4:56)
Good news of the punishment

The whole matter of physical sensation has much occupied scientists who want to discover the mechanism by which such sensations are experienced. Some of them say that we feel through the brain. We reply that there are some things which do not reach the brain which we still feel: as when someone points his finger at my eye as if to poke it and my eye automatically shuts. There is nothing to feel which could reach the brain. Some scientists say that sensation is achieved by means of the spinal cord and reflexes. So they conclude that sensation comes from cells in the skin. Their evidence is that when you make an injection into a muscle, the syringe has a needle and the pain, which is like the bite of a flee, occurs as soon as the needle pierces the skin, and after that we no longer feel it. Thus according to them the locus of sensation in the human being is the nerve ends in the skin.

Our Lord makes it clear that when the skin is burned away, sensation stops. Therefore Allah Almighty will replace the skin for them so that sensation of pain will continue. "*Every time their skins are burned off,"* i.e. they are completely burned and can no longer feel pain. He brings them new skins to make the punishment persist for them because it is the skin which conveys the feeling of pain to the conscious self. If the Qur'an had explicitly stated that the locus of

sensation for the human being is the skin, we would not understand anything, but He leaves it to slowly ripen in the minds.

"Every time their skins are burned off, We will replace them with new skins so that they can taste the punishment. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise." So the reason for the replacement of skins which have been burnt off by new skins is in order to make the punishment persist. Allah concludes the *a y a t* with the words, *"Allah is AllM i g h t y, AllWi s e . "* The All-Mighty is the one who cannot be overcome or encompassed due to His strength, power, and wisdom. We may enjoy disobedience for a few moments and sometimes for a couple of hours. So what harm does it do for my skin to be burned and then the matter ends? We say: "No, the One who will punish you is not overcome and so He will make the punishment last for you forever by replacing your skin with new skin. He is All-Wise. He does this with justice and not tyranny.

Reasons for going to the Fire
Taking the ***d e e n*** as a diversion and a game is a reason for being in the Fire forever

The Almighty says: *"The Companions of the Fire will call out to the Companions of the Garden, 'Throw down some water to us or some of what Allah has given you as provision.' They will say, 'Allah has forbidden both of them to the unbelievers.'"* (7:50) The people of the Fire will call out to the People of the Garden, seeking help and asking them to give to them some of the water or the provision which Allah has given them in the Garden. The People of the Garden will say, "We are bound now by Allah's command 'Be!' and have no choice. Allah has forbidden you anything of the Garden and denied it to you." When the people of the Fire ask for water, they seek the primary element of existence in the Fire whose columns encircle them. If they ask for help, they are give help with water like molten brass which fries the faces.

That is why Allah says after that about the unbelievers who are denied the blessing of the Garden: *"'Those who took their deen as a diversion and a game, and were deluded by the life of this world.' Today We will forget them just as they forgot the encounter of this Day and refuted Our Signs."* (7:51) That is how Allah clarifies for us in this *a y a t* the nature of the unbelievers who are forbidden the Garden. They are those who took their *deen* as a diversion and game. The first stage through which man passes is that of the game and then comes the stage of

diversion. In the case of every action to which energy is directed, we know that before energy is directed to it, it must first have passed through the mind in order to define what the result of the effort expended will be. It should either bring benefit or repel harm. Every action which does not bring benefit or repel harm is a game.

Reasons for going to the Fire

So the definition of "game" is an action which has no intention of removing harm or bringing about benefit, as is the case when children play with their toys. Children will play with toy guns or cars for a time. Do they have a real intention and aim when doing this? No, because if they did they would not destroy their toys, and the fact is that children often break their toys after a short time. This shows that they have no real intention and so it is an activity which does not bring benefit or r e p e l h a rm. When, however, we direct energy to something trivial rather than an important thing we are supposed to do, that is called diversion, which is what happens when we are asked to do something and then direct our energy to something else. What Allah punishes is diversion not playing games.

This is why we find the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, instructing people to train their children in sports which are useful to the community, like swimming, shooting and horsemanship. But the trouble with mankind in our time is that they make sport an end in itself. It is extraordinary that s p o rts have laws which no one can violate without being punished and that when a judge watches a race and forgets something or makes a mistake, the crowd are in uproar. So there are serious laws for sport but that which is really serious is often left without laws.

Similarly we find that the loss arising from diversion is heavy because people involved in diversion leave what is important for what is trivial. They sit down to a game of backgammon which takes a long time and neglect the work which will bring them p rovision. A subseqent problem arises from this, in that this diversion is not just confined to those who are actually playing but also attracts the attention of those who are not and takes up their time as well, time which would be better used in an activity which would benefit them. The corruption of all societies comes from some of its individuals using their energy on things which bring no good either to themselves or their community. Thus diversion is

wasted energy: *"Those who took their deen as a diver sion and a game, and were deluded by the life of this world."*

Their infatuation with the life of this world comes from their preoccupation with the secondary means that Allah has created to serve them. Each of them thinks that he is in control. When the life of this world deceives them, they forget the things which will bring them everlasting benefit and so their punishment is e x p ressed in the words of the Almighty, *" Today We will for g e t them just as they forgot the encounter of this Day and refuted Our S i g n s . "* (7:51) Do the words, "We will forget them" mean that Allah will leave them alone. No, Hell will take them to r o a s t them. Their being forgotten here means that Allah will not envelop them in his bounty, kindness and mercy, but will leave them to the Fire which will roast their faces and fry their skins.

It should be stressed again that this world is the place where we prepare our place in the Next World. If we want a place in 'Illiyun, we must perform the actions which will give us a place t h e re. If we desire a lesser place, we should per f o rm lesser actions. It is by our actions that we define our place in the Next World because Allah does not repay his creatures arbitrarily and u n j u s t l y. We are repaid according to our actions. That is why t h e re are 'People of the Garden', 'People of the Fire' and 'People of the Ramparts'. Allah has revealed this knowledge to us in the Qur'an to warn us and give us good news so that we strive to make our place in the Next World a noble one.

Hell is the repayment for mocking the Signs of Allah

Allah Almighty says: *"He has sent down to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's Signs being rejected and mocked at by people, you must not sit with them until they start to talk of other things; if you did you would be just the same as them. Allah will gather all the hypocrites and unbelievers into Hell."* (4:140) Allah issues a command to the believers that when they hear unbelievers mocking the *ayats* of Allah or rejecting them, "Do not sit with them until they change to another topic of conversation." This is so that they are not like the unbelievers because Allah will gather the hypocrites and unbelievers together in Hell. By that Allah protects the people of faith and guards them against any attack made against them.

Those who are solicitous of faith are those who believe. As long as you believe and are pleased with Islam for yourself, beware of making peace with those who attack the *deen* because if you make peace with such people, you show that you are fonder of them than faith. As long as you are pleased with faith as a path for yourself, defend it from anyone's attacks on it. If anyone is bold enough to criticise, mock or falsely attack faith, then the Muslim's firm commitment to faith should make him avoid such a gathering.

In the beginning the believers were few in number and too weak to stand against the unbelievers or hypocrites. So for a time the believers withdrew from the unbelievers and hypocrites when they were speaking badly about the Signs of Allah. The unbelievers and hypocrites knew by this behaviour that the honour of faith was dearer to the Muslims than sitting with them. If a Muslim sat with them while they attacked his faith, this would mean that such company was more important to him than his faith. So the unbelievers tended to make such criticism a constant topic in order to see the extent of the depth of faith in the hearts of the Muslims. But when an unbeliever notices a believer avoid any talk which mocks Islam, he recognises that the believer's faith is dear to him.

Allah Almighty reminds the believers in *Surat an-Nisa'* (4) that the judgement about leaving the unbelievers when they are disparaging faith is one that was transmitted to the believers in the first environment in which they were located – when the believers were still living in Makka with the idolaters. The judgement continued to be in force in Madina where some of the People of the Book lived. The responsibility which Allah imposes on human beings is one that they are capable of fulfilling. Man is subject to forgetfulness and so when he realises he must remember and get up and leave those who attack the signs of Allah. It was revealed in the Qur'an that when the believers hear those who reject the Signs of Allah and mock them, then they should leave that place.

We notice that what was revealed in the first *ayat* was seeing, not hearing: *"When you* ***see*** *people involved in mockery of Our Signs, turn from them."* (6:68) Then listening is addressed: *"He has sent down to you in the Book that when you* ***hear*** *A l l a h 's Signs being rejected ..."* (4:140). The important point is the simple knowledge
– whether it is by seeing or hearing – that they are mocking the *deen* of Allah. The people of *shirk* or other enemies of Allah may be seen to disparage the *deen*

of Allah or may be heard to have done so. Some of the idolaters did that by gesture and allusion when they saw a Muslim.

Allah says, *"you must not sit with them until they start to talk of other things,"* which suggests that when they discuss things other than the Signs of Allah, the believers can sit with them. That was at the beginning of Islam when the believers shared business with the idolaters and People of the Book. At that time Islamic society had no distinct existence. If Allah had told them straight away on the tongue of His Messenger not to sit with the unbelievers or idolaters, that would have cut off the benefits of the believers.

Discussion with such people will never reach a conclusion. That is why Allah says in one place in His Noble Book: *"They do not measure Allah with His true measure when they say, 'Allah would not send down anything to a mere human being.' Say: 'Who then sent down the Book which Musa brought as a Light and Guidance for the people?' You put it down on sheets of paper to display it while concealing much. You were taught things you did not know, neither you nor your forefathers. Say: 'Allah!' Then leave them engrossed in playing their games."* (6:91) "You conveyed to them, O Muhammad, that the One who revealed the Book to you is Allah Almighty. He revealed the Torah before it and they concealed some of it and disclosed some of it. Then after you have conveyed it, leave them to involve themselves in their falsehoods."

"He has sent down to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's Signs being rejected and mocked at by people, you must not sit with them until they start to talk of other things ..." Then comes a statement which terrifies and alarms the believer: *"You would be just the same as them."* When you sit with them when they are disparaging the Signs of Allah, then you are disbelieving just like them because you are conniving with falsehoods being said about the *deen*. Whoever is content with disbelief also disbelieves.

When the environment of faith is an autonomous mutually s u p p o rting one, no believer should sit with an unbeliever nor should we seek their assistance unless they first seek ours, because sitting with them when they are attacking the deen will encourage them to attack Islam. The believer must rebuke anyone who mocks the *d e e n*. The believers must turn from those who deviate from the Path of Allah or actively oppose such people. But contemporary societies honour

those who speak falsely about the *deen*. That seduces people into speaking falsely about the *deen*.

But if we turn from them, those outside of the Path of Allah will not display boldness against the *deen* or speak falsely about Allah and Islam. The corruption of society comes when we see those who falsely attack the *d e e n* of Allah being honoured and given position and status. The words of Allah, *"He has sent down to you in the Book that when you hear..."* refers to the fact that human understanding comes from seeing an action or hearing a w o rd. If you see an action which encourages corruption in the land, then know that it is a sign that the *deen* of Allah is being discussed in a false manner.

Allah says, " *Do not sit with them."* This announces a boycott. If, for instance, there is a man like this living somewhere, when he goes to a shop to buy something to eat, the shopkeeper should refuse to sell to him. No Muslim should have anything to do with someone like this who has left the Path. This boycott should be maintained until he learns. Everyone knows that society is zealous for the religion in which it believes and that Allah is dearer to them than every honour they see in their society. If those deviants and those who are fixed in falsehood saw that society cut them off and set limits on them, they would soon move to what is correct.

"Allah will gather all the hypocrites and unbelievers into Hell." Do not think this life is fruitless because the Muslims have not enjoyed success in worldly matters for one, two or even ten generations. The Muslim should know that this world for him is only a fleeting moment in a much longer journey. Life can end suddenly, so the Muslim must not work for this world alone. He must work so that he will meet Allah as a Muslim in the Next World. A believer fears that Allah will gather him with the hypocrites and the unbelievers into Hell. This is the end of someone who goes along with mockery or derision of His *deen*.

Allah says: *"Those who anticipate the worst for you say, 'Were we not with you?' whenever you gain a victory from Allah. But if the unbelievers have a success they say, 'Did we not have the upper hand over you and yet in spite of that keep the believers away from you?' Allah will judge between you on the Day of Rising. Allah will not give the unbelievers any way against the believers."* (4:141) Allah's words, *"Those who anticipate the worst for you,"* describe the hypocrites. In such a case someone is waiting for news and will act according to that information. The

hypocrites are waiting to see what happens to the believers. If it is good, they will go to them wanting to benefit from it. If evil comes, the hypocrites go for the benefit enjoyed by the enemies of Islam.

So outwardly they profess faith while inwardly they are unbelievers. They wait to see what happens to the believers and then act accordingly. *"Those who anticipate the worst for you say, 'Were we not with you?'"* If Allah gives the believers victory in the battle and they take booty, the hypocrites say, "Were we not with you? So we must have our share of the booty." But if the unbelievers are victorious, they go straight to them in accordance with the words of Allah, *"But if the unbelievers have a success they say, 'Did we not have the upper hand over you and yet in spite of that keep the believers away from you?'"*

They try then to benefit from the unbelievers by saying, "We w e re waiting to see what happened to the believers and what would happen to you and so we must have our share. Allah quotes them as saying, *"'Did we not have the upper hand over you and yet in spite of that keep the believers away from you?'"* T h i s means that they had full power and authority over them. Allah Almighty uses the same word in the following: *"Shaytan has gained the upper hand over them and made them forget the remem brance of Allah."* (58:19)

The words of the hypocrites to the unbelievers, "Did we not have the upper hand over you?" discloses their position when there is a battle between the armies of disbelief and faith and the hypocrites try to learn the details of what the believers intend. Sometimes the hypocrites go to the battlefield and take the unbelievers captive to protect them from the swords of the believers. Then they tell the unbelievers, "We had power over you," and by this they mean that they prevented the believers from killing them and they ask to be repaid for that.

The clear eloquence of the Qur'an becomes evident. When it talks about the victory of the believers it uses the word *fath* but when it refers to the victory of the unbelievers, it uses the term *nasib*, which means a mere temporary advantage. Then the decisive words of Allah follow: *"Allah will judge between you on the Day of Rising. Allah will not give the unbelievers any way against the believers."* Allah's promised victory of the believers over the unbelievers will not always take place within a time-span which is enough for every believer to see it in this world. The matter is definite but Allah does not say to the believer, "You will be victorious." The believer may die before he sees victory. That is why Allah mentions the

definitive resolution, which will take place on the Day of Rising when the Garden is confirmed as the final destination of every believer because that is the ultimate reward of faith.

The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, i n f o rmed us that we should not seek the r e w a rd of this world because success may go to anyone in this world. A man may miss life's bliss or it may miss him. The reward for faith abides as long as the One in whom you believe abides. The rule of faith says: Whoever acts righteously will enter the Garden. Allah says about those who are righteous: *"They are in the mercy of Allah, remain ing in it timelessly, forever."* (3:107) The mercy of Allah does not disappear because it is one of His Attributes and He is eternal.

When Allah says, *"Allah will judge between you on the Day of Rising,"* it means that this judgement will never be alter e d because there is no god but Him. Allah passed judgement on some of the relatives of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He gave judgement against the uncle of the Messenger and said about him: *"Ruin to the hands of Abu Lahab and ruin to him! His wealth has not helped him nor anything he has earned. He will burn in a Flaming Fire. And so will his wife, the fire wood-carrier, with a rope of twisted fibre round her neck."* (111:1-5) A l l a h 's words, *"He will burn in a Flaming Fire"* indicated that Abu Lahab would die an unbeliever and would not be guided by Allah to faith, in spite of the fact that there were many who first opposed the Messenger of Allah and then believed in the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The army of disbelief experienced the loss of a number of its leaders who joined the camp of faith. There were 'Umar ibn alKhattab, Khalid ibn al-Walid, 'Ikrima ibn Abi Jahl and others who became believers. So what could possibly have showed Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that Abu Lahab would not be one of these? Why did Abu Lahab not say, "My nephew says that I will burn in a flaming fire. I testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. I have spoken the words of faith." But he did not say that and Allah informed that His judgement of him was that he would not says the words of faith. Did it not lie within the power of Abu Lahab and his wife to say, "We testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah" so that would be the end of the matter? But Allah's judgement cannot be overturned and He decreed that they would disbelieve.

Chapter Three Those who will be Punished in the Fire Those who wage war on Allah

"The reprisal against those who wage war on Allah and His Messenger, and go about the earth corrupting it, is that they should be killed or crucified, or have their alternate hands and feet cut off, or be banished from the land. That will be their degradation in this world and in the Next World they will have a terrible punishment." (5:33) The first objective in war is to win. The reason for one group of people fighting another is that they hope to gain control of the other's wealth or possessions in the end. The beginning of waging war on Allah is a doomed attempt to usurp His authority and that is done by legislating by other than the Book and *Sunna*. If you try to prescribe other than the Path of Allah you are denying Allah's right of legislation and this is waging war on Allah.

Do those who wage war on Allah really think that they will be able to gain control over Allah's Kingdom because they most certainly will not? The authority of Allah over His Kingdom was absolute even before time began and it will remain so forever. So on what basis do they try to seize it? They want to nullify Allah's laws and make their own laws when Allah is, in reality, the sole legitimate Legislator. So why do we not leave mankind's Creator to establish the rules which will ensure the pr e s e rvation of mankind? That is why the highest act of treason perpetrated by people against Allah is to prescribe laws for themselves. When someone comes and wants to set down a law for the supposed b e t t e rment of human beings he is appropriating a right which properly belongs to Allah alone.

How do they make war on the Messenger?

We know that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had authority to legislate. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was fought against with the sword during his lifetime but after the Messenger died, waging war on him became like making war on Allah. So we accept his authority to legislate. But then some say, "We will legislate for ourselves, and we have no need of this Messenger," or a certain o rganisation says, "We will only accept the actual words of Allah." This idea has become widespread in some lands.

Adherents of this heresy are sometimes asked, "Have you performed the prayer?" If they say, "Yes," we then ask them, "How many *rak'ats* did you pray for *M a g h r i b*?" When they r e p l y, "Three *rak'ats*," we ask, "Where did you learn that from? How do you know that the *Maghrib* prayer is three *rak'ats* when it is not mentioned in the Noble Qur'an?" They can only r e m a i n silent. Or we ask, "How do you pay *zakat* and what reckoning do you use?" They say, "We pay two and a half percent on gold and silver and trading goods." But when we ask, "How did you learn that? How did you learn the *hajj*?" they are unable to respond. No, it is clear beyond dispute that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, played a legislative role and t h e r e f o re waging war on the Prophet is to abandon his statements, actions or matters confirmed by him.

Some people say that there are too many *h a d i t h s* f rom the Messenger of Allah. We say to them that the Mission of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, extended over twenty-three years, and all his words were *hadiths*. Each word which issued from his mouth is a noble *hadith*. If we w e re able to reckon only his words, there would be countless volumes but there are also the words of those who spoke with him. So how can any one say that the number of *hadiths* which have reached us is too numerous?

Some of these critics justify their position by saying that it is better to distance ourselves from the Messenger of Allah than to attribute to the Messenger of Allah something he did not do. They claim that this is preserving Islam. But such a person fails to take heed of the fact that it is Allah who preserves His *deen* and that the Messenger of Allah set down rules for sifting out *hadiths*. He said: "Whoever deliberately makes up lies about me will take his seat in the Fire." (Ahmad, at-Ti rmidhi and alHakim)

Al-Bukhari only transmits from those who were contemporary with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and were definitely known to have met him. Muslim c o n s i d e red it enough simply to be contemporary since it was possible for a meeting to have taken place. If there is a question about someone's integrity, his statement cannot be accepted. Therefore when someone attacks the *hadith* literature, saying, "It is enough for me to say, 'There is no god but Allah,'" I ask myself how he can fail to mention that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah? Without that he would not even be able to call the *a d h a n* or perf o rm the prayer. How does he understand the words of the Almighty, *"Whatever the Messenger gives you you should accept ..."* (59:7)?

The undisputed truth is that Allah delegated to Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the right to legislate.

The same applies to those who attack the Imams. They first attack the Prophet and then they move against the entire *deen*. Allah says about them, *"The reprisal against those who wage war on Allah and His Messenger, and go about the earth corrupting it..."* meaning that they remove what is sound in order to make it corrupt. Their recompense is to be killed or crucified as Allah says in this *a y a t*. The extreme severity of this penalty is so that the society of the believers will not fail to take a stand on this matter and so that the Islamic authorities will take the necessary steps.

Corruption, as is known, can take many forms. Corruption in respect of a person may mean killing him, or killing him and taking his money, taking his money without killing him, or terrorising him without taking his property or killing him. So it is as if the word 'corruption' comprises within itself various levels: killing someone, killing and robbing, robbing but not killing, or alarming and causing fear.

Allah says, *"or be banished from the land"*. Banishing means expulsion and sending far away. Banishing is only for someone of fixed abode and sending far away is only for someone who is established in one place. So before someone can be exiled he must be fixed and settled in a place. He must be in a place which is technically termed his domicile or homeland or place of residence. Banishment, then, means to expel him from his home and from the land which is his domicile and in which he has an arena in which he can work his corruption. But where will he be expelled when it is decided that he must be banished? Someone might say, "You are simply moving him from one place where he works corruption to another place where he can do the same."

That is not necessarily true because banishment does not give him the same opportunity for corruption. He was only able to do what he did because he was familiar with the topography of the first place and knew the manner and behaviour of its inhabitants and knew how to frighten certain people and how to usurp their goods and so forth. When he is expelled to a different place, he will require a long time to learn about it and where its people are and what their weaknesses are and so on. So banishment will deter his corruption. But what

land is he to be banished to? Expulsion is for those who are fixed and exiling is only for the firmly established.

L i n g u i s t i c a l l y, we know that the word banishment (*n a f y*) is derived from a physical concept. When we fetch up water from a well, the bucket goes down to the bottom of the well with a rope attached to the middle of its handle. When we pull the bucket back up from the well, it fills right up with water according to its width and depth. Can we haul it up steadily enough to stop any water from spilling over the edge of the bucket? This is virtually impossible. We always find that a little water spills out over the side of the bucket. The water which falls out is called " *n a f y*" . T h e re are many meanings derived from *" n a f y "*. There is also *nufaya*, which is something superfluous.

What then is banishment from the land? Do we take "land" (*ard*) in its general or particular meaning? i.e. the land in which highway robbery occurred or the whole earth. If we take it in the particular meaning, then banishment is to any other land. But if we take the land in its general meaning, what does banishment then imply? Allah says in another place in the Qur'an, *"We said to the Tribe of Israel after that, 'Inhabit the land ..."* (17:104) Without argument they already lived in the land as 'earth'. This statement has an intended meaning, and we know that 'inhabiting' is only mentioned when we want to isolate a particular place on earth, for instance, when someone says, "I live in France" or "I live in Venezuela." This defines a certain place of residence in the earth. So Allah is informing us that He would separate them in the earth so that they would never abide in one place. That is what we find in the words of the Almighty, *"And We split them into nations in the earth."* (7:168)

They have no particular homeland and are scattered about in every land. This is the actual situation which exists. Do the tribe of Israel have true permanency in any country? Even in the c o u n t ry which they set up for themselves as a result of the Balfour Declaration has not achieved that. Allah gave his promise to their believers that they would enter the temple when their good behaviour merited its restoration. But by their nature the Jews continue to be dispersed throughout the earth, and in every land they have their own special quarters and each group maintains its own identity and does not assimilate with others: *"We said to the Tribe of Israel after that, 'Inhabit the land and, when the promise of the Next World comes, We will produce you as a motley crowd.'"* (17:104)

So banishment is one of the forms of punishment for causing corruption. There are four types of causing corruption: killing, killing and robbery, robbery, and causing terror. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, added something else to this list while he was alive and scholars should take note of it.

The first instance of banishment in Islam was when the Messenger of Allah banished al-Hakam ibn Abi'l-'As fr o m Madina to Ta'if. The reason for the banishment was because – and we seek refuge with Allah – al-Hakam used to ape the gait of the Messenger of Allah out of mockery. When the Messenger of Allah walked, he walked as if he were going down a hill and had a very distinctive gait. The Messenger of Allah knew that alHakam was aping his gait. Once the Messenger of Allah turned around suddenly and surprised al-Hakam while he was doing it and he banished him to Ta'if where he remained while the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was alive.

When Abu Bakr became khalif, al-Hakam's family went to Abu Bakr and were told by him, "I would never rescind something which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, imposed." They went to 'Umar in al-Khattab and he too did not consent. When 'Uthman became khalif, he was shy and retiring. He said, "I take the word of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to allow the possibility of release," and 'Uthman allowed him back.

Thus bani shm ent was the fi rs t puni shment w hich the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, imposed. Is that which al-Hakam did considered to be corruption? We say that corruption results from that which harms the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and al-Hakam used to mock the gait of the Messenger of Allah.

Some law-makers may say that prison takes the place of exile. This is not so because prison is now full of comforts. Prison of old was much harsher. The goal of prison is to remove the corrupter in order to weaken his evil even if he is not far from his residence and land. It is left to the judge to decide however he wishes, especially when there are many Muslim lands so that he is able to banish him from one land to another.

Allah follows this with His words, " *That will be their degrada tion in this world and in the Next World they will have a terrible pun ishment."* This statement is connected to a limited punishment of the corrupters on the earth, who wage war on Allah and His Messenger, It is: *"that they should be killed or crucified, or have their alternate hands and feet cut off, or be banished from the land."* These punishments are degradation for them.

The word "degradation" (*khaziya*) has two meanings linguistically. One meaning is disgrace and the other is shame. The two meanings converge. If a person's wrongdoing is exposed, he is ashamed of what he did. Those actions are a disgrace. This is like someone who commits highway robbery against people who should be safe. We tell a person who does something like this, " Your strength is not intrinsic. It is misappropriated. If your power had been intrinsic, then when they take you to kill you, c rucify you, or to amputate your hand and foot, you would be able to resist. You were bold against the defenceless who could not defend themselves. This is disgrace for you, especially when you see those who feared you now watching your punishment. Your degradation now is but a prelude to another punishment in the Next World, where your punishment will be far more terrible."

"That will be their degradation in this world and in the Next World they will have a terrible punishment." (5:33) All retribution in this world is necessarily commensurate with the ability of mankind to punish, but what will it be like when they are handed over to the Ultimate Power? Then the justice of Allah will be disclosed, glory be to Him and may He be exalted! He grants an o p p o rtunity to those who are prodigal towards themselves t h rough repentance, because Allah is merciful to His slaves. If e v e ryone was punished for every crime he committed or every w rongdoer chastised for every wrong action, the corruption in the land would increase because people would despair of the mercy of Allah and their ferocity and harshness would increase. Glory be to the One who has opened the door of repentance to everyone who has wronged himself. If there was no repentance, then the prodigal would be lost.

Those who turn their backs in battle

Allah Almighty says: *"Anyone who turns his back on them that d a y, unless he is withdrawing to rejoin the fight or withdrawing to s u p p o rt another group, brings*

Allah's anger down upon himself. His refuge is Hell. What an evil destination!" (8:16) We notice that in this noble *ayat*, Allah Almighty only connects anger to those who turn their backs, fleeing from the enemy. Those who turn their backs as a tactic to make the enemy think they are retreating and then turn round to attack again are true fighters whose faith is sincere and who are merely withdrawing to deceive the enemy. The same applies to those who turn their backs with the object of joining another group of believers to renew the attack against the enemy with them so that they do not lose their lives for nothing. But believers should always be keen to meet their death fighting in the Way of Allah because Allah has promised them the Garden.

Originally a believer was equal to ten unbelievers. Allah Almighty says: *"O Prophet! Spur on the believers to fight. If there are twenty of you who are steadfast, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are a hundred of you, they will overcome a thousand of those who reject, because they are people who do not understand."* (8:65) But Allah knew that the believers had some weakness and so He made a believer in battle equal to two of the unbelievers by saying: *"Now Allah has made it lighter for you, knowing there is weak ness in you. If there are a hundred of you who are steadfast, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are a thousand of you, they will o v e rcome two thousand with Allah's permission. Allah is with the steadfast."* (8:66)

Thus the acceptable ratio between believers and unbelievers moved from ten to one, to two to one. This was part of Allah's mercy. So if someone sees himself facing more than two of the enemy, Allah makes it clear that he should withdraw to another g roup of believers to avoid being lost for no purpose. *"A n y o n e who turns his back on them that day, unless he is withdrawing to rejoin the fight or withdrawing to support another group."* (8:16) We *Those who turn their backs in battle*

know that someone who withdraws (*m u t a h a r i f*) to rejoin the fight is employing a stratagem. There are many modern expressions derived from this verb. We call a person *'harif*" when nothing overpowers or outsmarts him. Thus the one who withdraws in fighting is the one who is tricking the enemy and trying to make them think he is defeated, while in fact it is one of the preludes to victory.

The word 'withdrawing to support' (*m u t a h a y y i z*) is derived f rom *' h a y y i z '* ("confines"), which is the place where a body is located. Each of us has a place he is located. Each person who is addressed has a place and is separate by his nature. In this *ayat* the word *' m u t a h a y y i z*' directs every believer who is fighting to take a good location for himself from which can hit the target. Thus it is always necessary for a fighter to join a group of his brothers with the aim of strengthening opposition to the enemy. Anyone who does not do that will receive a punishment fro m Allah. Allah makes that clear when He says, *"He brings Allah's anger down upon himself."* (8:16)

The expression used in the Noble Qur'an befits what they do because when someone turns his back on the enemy he is running from the battle. But if someone r e t reats with the aim of deceiving the enemy and as a battle tactic or to str e n g t h e n another group of believers, that is something entirely different. He is helping the *deen* of Allah as opposed to someone who retreats and flees and whose flight brings down on him the wrath of Allah. As we know, anger from Allah is one of the reasons for everlasting punishment. That is why Allah Almighty says, *" H e brings Allah's anger down upon himself. His refuge is Hell. What an evil destination!"* (8:16)

A refuge is a place where a person seeks safety and we know that when one of us wants to rest, he resorts to the place where he expects to find rest and security. Anyone who flees fr o m meeting the enemy in any of the battles of Islam will not find any refuge except the Fire. The Fire will welcome him, as recorded in the conversation between it and Allah on the Day of Rising, which is described clearly in the *ayat*: *"The Day when We say to Hell, 'Are you full?' it will ask, 'Are there more to come?'"* (50:30) Allah confirms in His Noble Qur'an that the Fire will be enraged at the unbelievers because it is one of the forces of Allah Almighty and is compelled to carry out the judgement of Allah. Whoever diverges from the Path of Allah in this world will meet the Fire which will be seething with rage. The unbelievers will hear its seething and rasping when they see it from a distance. Allah Almighty says, *"When it sees them coming from a long way off, they will hear it seething and rasping."* (25:12)

If the Fire is your refuge, is that not the worst place of return? Anyone who runs away from the fray and flees from the encounter with the enemy and fears to be killed will go to something far worse than the fighting he feared.

Those who deliberately kill other Muslims

"As for anyone who kills a believer deliberately, his repayment is Hell, remaining in it timelessly, forever. Allah is angry with him and has cursed him, and has p re p a red for him a terrible punishment." (4:93) Killing a believer deliberately is different from accidental killing which the killer only knows about after it happens. The recompense for someone who deliberately kills a believer is Hellfire and no expiation is possible.

Allah has made the crime of murder atrocious because premeditation means that the killer nur t u red the idea of killing. Thus there is the legal term, "Murder with premeditation," i.e. the killer imagined the killing first and then actually carried it out. It is assumed that in the period in which he planned the m u rder he could have been deterred by the *d e e n*. This means that Allah was absent from his mind for the entire time he was plotting the crime. If Allah had come to his mind, he would have turned back from it. As long as Allah is absent from a person's mind, Allah absents him from His mercy.

"As for anyone who kills a believer deliberately, his repayment is

Hell, remaining in it timelessly, forever." It is said that the reason for the revelation of this *ayat*, was the event concerning Miqyas ibn Dababa who had a brother called Hisham. He found his brother murdered among the Banu-Najjar, a tribe of the Ansar in Madina. When he found Hisham murdered, Miqyas went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him the news. He sent a man of the Banu Fihr with him and wrote to them to hand over the killer to Miqyas. The Banu'n-Najjar said, "By Allah, we do not know who killed him, but we will pay the blood money." They paid him a hundred camels and then the two of them set off for Madina. Then Miqyas attacked the Fihri man, killed him in retaliation for his brother, took the camels and went to Makka and apostatised.

When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, heard about this, he made his blood allowed, meaning that there would be no punishment for whoever killed him. When Makka was conquered, Miqyas was found clinging to the curtains of the Ka'ba, seeking sanctuary. The Messenger of Allah ordered his execution. *"As for anyone who kills a believer deliberate ly, his*

repayment is Hell, remaining in it timelessly, forever. Allah is angry with him and has cursed him, and has prepared for him a terri ble punishment."

Here we find more than one stage of everlasting punishment: Hell, eternity in the Fire, anger from Allah, a curse from Allah, and preparation by Allah of a terrible punishment. It is as if Hell is not the whole punishment. The punishment also includes eternity in the Fire, the wrath of Allah, a curse, and then preparation of an even more terrible punishment. This is what we ask Allah to give us refuge from. Some of us imagine that the punishment is simply Hell. Some people ignore the fact that various types of punishment are involved. In our normal life when we hear that a person is in prison, we think that that is the extent of it. But when we learn what happened in prison, we know that there are worse things than simple imprisonment.

Can a killer repent? Scholars disagree about this. Some say that there can be no repentance for someone who kills like this. Others say that he can repent. Ibn 'Abbas was once sitting in a group when someone came up and asked him, "Can a murderer repent?" and He replied. "No." Then some time after that another man came and asked Ibn 'Abbas the same question and he replied, "Yes." His comrades said, "How can you say this when before you said there was no repentance?" Ibn 'Abbas replied, "The first man wanted to murder someone and the second one actually had killed someone. I frightened the first and I did not want to make the second despair of the mercy of his Lord."

How was Ibn 'Abbas able to differentiate between these two men? The insight and perception of the believer is a gift which Allah gives to whoever He wills. Once one of the Companions of the Prophet, Messenger of Allah, asked him, "Which part of Islam is best?" The Prophet replied, "That you feed people and give the greeting to those you know and those you do not know." Another asked him and he replied, "The one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe." Thus the Messenger answered each with the answer which was best for him. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud asked him, "Which action is best?" He replied, "The prayer in its time." He asked, "Then what?" He said, "That people are safe from your tongue."

We recognise that the *ayat* about deliberate killing demands more thought about the words, "... *his repayment is Hell, remain ing in it forever*." Is "forever" a very long time or does it actually mean time without end? If it is time without end,

why does Allah sometimes say *"forever in it"* (3:88) and sometimes *"forever in it without end."* (4:169) This would indicate that the expr e s s i o n "without end" must add something to the idea of a timeless etern i t y. The two words apparently mean the same but if they are used together and both mean the same, then the words "without end" would not add anything to the meaning. The Qur'an is made up of Allah's words and Allah's words are free of excess or repetition. Thus it must mean that "forever" means an unimaginably long time, and "forever without end" means that long time with no end. That is how we should understand it since every expression in the Qur'an is precise and has a clear meaning.
We find that Allah Almighty says in one place about the eternity of the Fire: *"On the day He comes, no self will speak except by His permission. Some of them will be wretched and others glad. As for those who are wretched, they will be in the Fire, where they will sigh and moan, remaining in it timelessly, forever, as long as the heavens and earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Your Lord is the Doer of anything He wills."* (11:105-107) Allah, glory be to Him and may He be exalted, in this *ayat* seems to make an exception to remaining eternally in the Fire by the use of the words, *"except as your Lord wills."* The exception must have a meaning and so we cannot take eternity to be absolutely forever but only as an unimaginably long time.

He says the same about the eternity of the Garden: *"As for those who are glad, they will be in the Garden, remaining in it time lessly, forever, as long as the heavens and earth endure, except as your L o rd wills. An uninterrupted gift."* (11:108) The words of Allah, "*except as your Lord wills"*, mean that this "forever" can come to an end. As long as there is an exception, the exception must have a meaning. Ther e f o re "forever" cannot mean "forever without end."

The *ayats* must be regarded in this spirit. One of the scholars of doctrine who lived in the Abbasid period, 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd, was famous for protecting the honour of knowledge and the status of scholars to such an extent that the khalif of the time said about the scholars around him, "All of them are in quest of the p rey except 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd." His scholarly position was very high and he was also very precise in his thinking. Qays ibn Anas recounts this story about him, saying, "I was in the assembly of 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd who was saying, 'I will be brought on the Day of Rising and will be told, "Why did you say that the one who kills deliberately cannot repent?" I will recite the *a y a t*, "... *h i s repayment*

is Hell, remaining in it forever."'" Qays ibn Anas continued, "I was the youngest of those present but I said to him, "If I were with you, I would say, *'Allah does not forgive partners being attributed to Him but He forgives whoever He wills for anything a p a rt from that.'* (4:48)" Qays then said, "By Allah, 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd did not reply to what I said." This means that he agreed with it.

What does this mean? It means that we should not take "forever" to mean without end because Allah made an exception to it in another *ayat*.

Those who deny and are arrogant

"But as for those who reject Our Signs and are arrogant regarding them, they are the Companions of the Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever." (7:36) Why is the fate of those who reject the Signs and are arrogant regarding them to be inhabitants of the Fire and to be in it forever? It is because even though the means of life were made easy for them, they did not take account of the fact that they have a portion in the Next World and paid no attention to the ultimate purpose of human life.

They lacked faith as the Almighty says: *"If anyone desires to cultivate the Next World, We will increase him in his cultivation. If anyone desires to cultivate this world, We will give him some of it but he will have no share in the Next World."* (42:20) What about the person who chooses this world? Why does he forget that this life is temporary? Why does he fail to pay attention to the Next World? You must know that while you are in this world you are a regent on the earth. We are all part of the same human species and we have been given mastery over all other species. In spite of all our differences we have a common end which is the same for every human being.

That end is our meeting with Allah because it is the end which is common to everything in existence. All of us will experience death from which we will pass to another life. All who are arrogant regarding the Signs of Allah enter into a contract which involves nothing but loss because when you compare this world to the Next World you will find that man's time in this world is s h o rt but that the Next World is for e v e r. A man's life in this world is uncertain and enjoyment in it is according to the means and capabilities of the individual. But the Next World is certain and the bliss which the believer enjoys in it and the

punishment of the unbeliever there is according to the unlimited scope of Allah's power.

"They are the Companions of the Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever." (7:36) "Companions of the Fire" means that the wrongdoers will cling to and accompany the Fire as a man would accompany a friend because the Fire is the intimate of the disobedient. It asks, "*Are there any more to come?"*

" *'Enter into the Fire together with the nations of jinn and men who have passed away before you.' Each time a nation enters, it curses its sister nation until, when they are all gathered together in it, the last of them will say to the first of them, 'Our Lord, those are the ones who misguided us, so give them a double punishment in the Fire.' He will s a y, 'Each will have double. But you do not kno w. ' "* (7:38) Allah makes it clear to us that by the command "Be!" they will enter the Fire as nations who passed away before them will also enter it. They will enter with them and experience the same fate to which they go.

They are a hodgepodge of nations because all disbelief will be repaid in the same way. Following the nations before them is what led them to disbelief. The nations which went before were a model of misguidance for the nations coming after them. When they enter they will curse their forebears. Consider a man who goes to prison for a crime he committed. After that the one who enticed him to crime and whose example he followed enters. When they meet in prison, will the first not curse the second?

When they meet one another, this extraordinary conversation will take place: *"The last of them will say to the first of them, 'Our Lord, those are the ones who misguided us, so give them a double pun ishment in the Fire.'"* (7:38) They are directing the words to Our Lord, *"Our Lord, those are the ones who misguided us."* It is as if the words which are addressed to Allah are testimony against those who were the means of their misguidance. They say this to our Lord asking him to give them a double punishment in the Fire with the words *"So give them a double punishment in the Fire."* But Allah says to all of them, *"Each will have double. But you do not know."*

E v e ry nation of them has a double punishment since it was misguided and it misguided others. We understand "double" to mean the same again. Allah is saying to them, "You, imitators, also misguided others who imitated you because

you were many in number and had great strength and deluded people into following you. You have a double punishment since you also misguided. You did not know that the One who would call you to account is very precise in the reckoning and will give each person his due in full.

What do the first say to the last. Allah tells us: *"The first of them will say to the last of them, 'You are in no way superior to us so taste the punishment for what you earned.'"* (7:39) i.e. as long as you receive a double punishment like us, all are equal. *"Taste the pun ishment for what you earned."* That is not unfairness from Allah nor is it tyranny over His slaves. It is pure justice since it has happened because of what they have done.

It is known that tasting refers to food. Do they eat the punishment? No, because Allah makes every limb of theirs taste the punishment and when Allah sees the punishment encompass the e n t i re body, He gives each limb in the body the same sense of taste that the tongue has. That is why Allah Almighty says in another place: *"Allah makes a likeness of a city which was safe and at peace, its provision coming to it plentifully from every side. Then it showed ingratitude for Allah's blessings so Allah made it wear the robe of hunger and fear for what it did."* (16:112) This is a kind of tasting. It is as if hunger enveloped the entire body. Tasting has the s t rongest effect of any of the senses and a robe envelops the whole body. *"Taste the punishment for what you earned."*

Allah says *"for what you earn e d "* because their evil deeds are not considered something done involuntarily. They are in fact something unnatural to them. The natural state of affairs is for a human being to do good deeds without constraint or affectation. But where evil deeds are concerned he is in reality acting against his own best interests so evil deeds are contrary to the natural human pattern. There are many, however, who are addicted to evil deeds and that corrupts their nature, so that they cease to feel any conflict when they commit them. They sin as if it was p e rfectly natural for them. This is the fate which over c o m e s those who are prodigal against themselves. They may begin to delight in doing evil.

Allah Almighty says: *"As for those who deny Our Signs and are arrogant regarding them, the Gates of Heaven will not be opened for them, and they will not enter the Garden until a camel goes through a needle's eye. That is how We repay the evil-doers."* (7:40) Allah wants to reiterate His judgement and defines the one

condemned so that he will be known by his crime. He wants everyone to know that this is indeed a crime and that whoever commits it will receive sentence and punishment: *"As for those who deny Our Signs and are arrogant regarding them."*

The meanings of "Signs" has been explained elsewhere. They are either the inimitable verses of the Qur'an or Allah's signs in existence. If any person thinks that he is too great to follow the Path brought by a Messenger whose tr u s t w o rthiness is known among his people, this person merits severe punishment. It is true that Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not have rank or power with which to fight the leaders and great men of Quraysh. That is why we find in the Qur'an: *"They say, 'Why was this Qur'an not sent down to one of the great men of the two cities?'"* (42:31) They recognised the exalted nature of the Qur'an but they wished that the Qur'an had been revealed to a man who was considered great according to their criteria and material standards.

Anyone who denies the Signs and is too arrogant to follow the Messenger will not have the Gates of Heaven open for him. N a t u r a l l y, we know that those for whom the Gates of Heaven will be opened are the believers. When their spirit ascends to the Highest Assembly, they will find that their righteous actions have ascended and raised them higher. As for the deniers, they will fall from the *Sirat* and not enter the Garden. Allah connected their entry into the Garden to something which is logically and physically impossible: *"they will not enter the Garden until a camel goes through a needle's eye."*

"The eye of a needle" is the hole that the thread goes through. The thread cannot enter the eye unless its thickness is less than that of the hole; the thread must be firm so that it can penetrate; and the end of the thread must come to a point otherwise it will not enter the hole. If we brought a camel and told it to go through the eye of the needle there is no way it would be able to do it. Appropriately, Allah Almighty has connected that image to the entry of those people into the Garden to illustrate its impossibility. Some people ask what the connection is between a camel and the eye of a needle. The reply is that the Arabic word for camel, *"j a m a l "*, is also applied to thick r o p e s composed of many strands, like the hawsers of a ship, which are thick and twisted.

Poets speak of this question, and we find one of them describing his preoccupation with the Beloved, his yearning for Him, and ardour towards Him to the extent that he becomes thin and weak. He says:

If the effect of the passion and ardour which I feel were applied to a camel, no unbeliever would enter the Fire.

The poet means that if the passion and ardour which aff e c t him were to be felt by the camel, it would become so thin and lean that it could go through the eye of a needle. Here our Lord makes it clear: If a camel could enter the eye of the needle, He will admit them to the Garden but *"They will not enter the Garden until a camel goes through a needle's eye. That is how We repay the evil-doers."*

They deserve this repayment for their crimes. Allah says: *"They will have Hell as a resting-place and covering layers on top of them. That is how We repay the wr o n g d o e r s . "* (7:41) A 'r e s t i n g place' is a bed and it also is the word used for a baby's cradle. A 'covering layer' is what blankets it. It means that Hell is their cradle and its blanket is Hellfire. In another *a y a t* the Almighty says: *"They will have awnings of Fire above them and awnings below t h e m ."* (7:41) These images embrace two directions in thr e e dimensional space. There are six directions: in front, behind, right, left, above and underneath. The 'resting-place' indicates 'underneath' and the 'covering' 'above'. The same applies to 'the awnings of Fire'. But Allah wanted to make Hellfire encompass all the dimensions of the unbeliever. So He also says: *"We have made ready for the wrongdoers a Fire whose billowing walls of smoke will hem them in."* (18:29) This means that the punishment encompasses all directions and dimensions of the wr o n g d o e r s . The word *'Jahannam'* or Hell is derived from *jahuma*, which is something fearful, frowning with a hateful face.

Those who hoard gold and silver

"As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the good news of a painful punishment." (9:34) When the expression "give them the good news" is heard, it is usually about something good. When it is used for something bad it is sarcasm. If a man who is mighty and well-known among his people does wrong and transgresses and oppr e s s e s people but does not fear Allah, he is a wrongdoer who will be b rought on the Day of Rising and punished with the sever e s t punishment. He will be told: *"Taste that! You are the mighty one, the noble one!"* (44:49) The nature of his position in the Fire is humiliation by the punishment of Hell where he cannot be honoured or mighty.

The angels of the Fire tell him, *"Taste that! You are the mighty one, the noble one!"* It is great mockery and derision.

"On the Day it is heated up in the fire of Hell and their foreheads, sides and backs are branded with it: 'This is what you hoarded for yourselves! So taste what you were hoarding!'" (9:35) We know that fire heats up metals but burns paper so how can this *ayat* apply to the hoarding of paper money? We say that the All-Powerful can make something which does not normally retain heat do so, or change it into gold and silver with which it will brand various places on the body. A brand is when you bring red hot metal and stamp it onto the skin so that it burns it and leaves a mark.

When one of the Companions died in the tim e of the M e s s e n g e r, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, they looked among his clothes and found a dinar in them. The Messenger said, "This is a brand from the Fire" because its owner was eager to hoard it. When they found that another C om p ani o n had tw o d i nar s w h i ch he had ho ar d ed, th e Messenger of Allah said "Two brands of the Fire." (*Musna*d Ibn Hanbal) This was before *zakat* was prescribed because when the owner of wealth has paid Allah's due in it, it is not considere d hoarded. Otherwise, when a man leaves some wealth for his children on which he has paid *zakat*, it would be considered hoarding. If we were to say that, we would strip away the meaning f rom the *a y a t s* of inheritance in the Noble Qur'an because the *ayats* of inheritance were revealed to tell us how to distribute the wealth left by people when they die. Inherited wealth is certainly lawful when its owner has paid *zakat* on it and it is not considered hoarding.

Allah Almighty says here, *"their foreheads, sides and backs are branded with it."* Why does Allah single out these places for this punishment? Because each of these parts plays a role in not spending wealth in the way of Allah. For example, you find that the face indicates willingness or reluctance. When you see a poor man facing you asking for charity and you know that he is poor and has come to you because of his pressing need, the first thing if you want to avoid paying the right of Allah is to avert your face from him, or frown and show anger on your face. This poor person feels humble and abased because the rich man has left him and gone away from him.

If averting the face does not help and the poor man continues to present himself to the wealthy man, he turns his side towards him so that he is aware that he is

not pleased. If the poor man persists, then he turns his back on him. In this way these three parts participate in refusal to spend in the Way of Allah: the face which turned away, then the side and finally the back. These three parts participate in denying the right of Allah to the poor. That is why they must be punished and so the foreheads, sides and backs of hoarders are branded.

Then Allah says, *"This is what you hoarded for yourselves!"* i.e. this is that on which you refused to pay the right of Allah. If a man hoards a lot, then his punishment will be more severe than that of someone who only hoarded a little because the brand will be correspondingly larger. If the hoard is small, the brand will be small. This is why the hoarder should not be beguiled by the amounts that he has hoarded because his reckoning will be according to the amount he hoarded.

A l l a h 's words: *"So taste what you were ho ard i n g !"* means that your punishment in the Next World will be because of your hoarding wealth. The wealth in whose storing up you delight in this world should in fact be a cause of sorrow for you because you are only storing up punishment for yourselves on the Day of Rising. Whatever boasting and delusion hoarding wealth accords you in the life of this world will be followed by punishment in the Next World commensurate with the amount hoarded up.

Although it is in the nature of a text such as this to be e x p ressed in a discursive and scholastic manner, readers should b e w a re of viewing it as an academic exercise or a theological treatise, for to do so would be to fail to grasp the potentially lifetransforming message it conveys. Its subject matter is of urgent and immediate relevance to every human being. Hell is not some i n t e resting, philosphical construct, a teleological possibility of human existence, it is a devastating and implacable reality facing you, the reader, every moment of your life.

The purpose of human existence, no matter whether you believe it or not, lies in the fact of accountability. Human beings will certainly be called to account for their actions in this world and that will result for them in either the reward of the Paradise or the punishment of Hell. It is only the fact of accountability which gives meaning to the words right and wrong. Right is what is pleasing to God and leads to Paradise and wrong is what is displeasing to God and leads Hell. What we experience in this world is a faint shadow of a reality which we will only

fully experience in the Next World. Then we will find the meanings of our lives either in the blissful delights of Paradise or in the agonising t e rrors of Hell, and do not make the mistake of thinking that these things are distant from us. As the Qur'an and *Sunna* make clear we ourselves are moulding our own fates, minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day.

This book must be taken quite literally for what it is: a practical manual, describing aspects of the terrible fate awaiting those who fail to get the point of what it is to be a human being and guiding its readers to a path which can lead them safely through the minefield of the lives in this world so that do not spend the timeless eternity of the Next World undergoing the ter r i b l e , implacable punishment of Hell but rather spend it experiencing the indescribably sweet delights of Paradise.

Accordingly We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an so that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around it,

and give warning of the Day of Gathering about which there is no doubt:
one group in the Garden,
the other in the Blazing Fire. (42:5)

The inhabitants of the Fire
and the inhabitants of the Garden
are not the same.
It is the inhabitants of the Garden who are the victors. (59:20) Ansar:
ayat: deen:
hadith: hajj:
jinn:
Ka'ba:
lam:
Maghrib: rak'at:
shaytan: Sirat:
sura: zakat:

Glossary

the "Helpers", the people of Madina who welcomed and ai d ed th e Pr o ph et a nd t he Em i g r ant s (Muhajirun) when they came from Makka. a verse of the

Qur'an.
the life-transaction, literally the debt between two parties, in this usage between Creator and created. reported speech and/or action of the Prophet. the annual pilgrimage to Makka which is one of the five Pillars of Islam.
inhabitants of the heavens and the earth made of smokeless fire who are usually invisible.
the cube-shaped building at the centre of the Haram in Makka, also known as the House of Allah. a letter of the Arabic alphabet which is also a preposition
the daily ritual prayer offered at sunset.
a unit of the prayer consisting of a series of standings, bowing, prostrations and sittings.
a devil, particularly Iblis.
the narrow bridge which spans Hellfire and must be crossed to enter the Garden.
a chapter of the Qur'an.
a wealth tax, one of the five Pillars of Islam.

Zaqqqum: a tree with bitter fruit which grows at the botton of the Fire.